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Charles M. Taintor
August 26th, 1885.
Manchester —
Connecticut.

# SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

## REV. ABIEL ABBOT, D. D.

OF BEVERLY, MASS.

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WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY S. EVERETT.

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1831.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

These discourses have been selected from the manuscripts of the lamented author, in the hope, that they might prove an acceptable offering to his friends, and an auxiliary to the great interests of christian piety and charity, which it was the object of his ministry to promote. They are not presented as the best possible specimen, that might be furnished of his professional gifts, or even of his accustomed strain of preaching. The difficulties, inseparable from all post-humous publications, have been experienced in this. And, as is intimated in the following Memoir, the practice of Dr. Abbot of improving local occurrences and interesting passing events, as the topics of his discourses, while it must have contributed to the usefulness and acceptance of his pulpit services, has rendered a selection from his manuscripts a task of peculiar delicacy. Could this volume have been prepared under

his own inspection and judgment, it cannot be doubted, that in point of literary execution, it might have been more worthy of the general favor.

But sermons, it must be remembered, are not to be read, chiefly for the gratification of a fastidious taste, but as helps to religious knowledge; to the cherishing of devout affections, and the maintenance of an holy life. The very circumstance, therefore, to which we have alluded, may give to this selection an additional interest to the mind of the serious reader. He may learn here, how wisely the various providence of God in the appointments of prosperity or of adversity as the lot of individuals, families, or communities, may be marked and improved. For these great purposes, and as containing lessons of practical godliness, we cordially commend this volume to christians of every name. They will find here, not words of "doubtful disputation," but of vital truth. And we are certain, that it will be the accomplishment of the most earnest wishes of their author, should they prove in any degree instrumental of diffusing among our churches and within our hearts, that spirit of evangelic love and charity, which pervaded his own.

*Boston, Dec.* 25, 1830.

# CONTENTS.


Page

MEMOIR, . . . . . 9

*Publications of Dr. Abbot*, . . . . . 71

SERMON I.

*The Grace of God bringing Salvation*, . . . . 1

SERMON II.

*The Kingdom of God without Observation*, . 15

SERMON III.

*Excellency of the Gospel*, . . . . . 27

SERMON IV.

*Hearing the Word*, . . . . . 40

SERMON V.

*The Love of God*, . . . . . 54

SERMON VI.

*Heavenly Blessedness, the consequence of following the Lamb*. . . . . 66

SERMON VII.

*Duty of Christians*, . . . . . 80

SERMON VIII.

*Duty of Christians, part 2d*, . . . . . 91

SERMON IX.

*Family Religion*, . . . . . 103

SERMON X.

*Moral Education of Children*, . . . . . 115

SERMON XI.

*To the Aged*, . . . . . 128

SERMON XII.

*Translation of Elijah*, . . . . . 141

SERMON XIII.

*Daniel*, . . . . . 154

SERMON XIV.

*Peter*, . . . . . 156

SERMON XV.

*Fruits of Renovation*, . . . . . 171

SERMON XVI.

*Aquila and Priscilla*, . . . . . 184

SERMON XVII.

*Death-Bed Repentance*, . . . . . 196

SERMON XVIII.

*Song of Angels at the Birth of Christ*, . . 209

SERMON XIX.

*Christ, the Light of the World,* . . . . . 223

SERMON XX.

*Thanksgiving,* . . . . . 236

SERMON XXI.

*The Pride of Prosperity and its Fall,* . . . 249

SERMON XXII.

*Thanksgiving,* . . . . . 262

SERMON XXIII.

*Ecclesiastical Peace Recommended,* . . . 277

# MEMOIR.

Abiel Abbot, the author of the following Sermons, was born in Andover, Mass. on the 17th of August, 1770. He was the youngest, with the exception of one who died in early infancy, of the children of John and Abigail Abbot. The paternal estate, where he continued under the guiding care of his excellent parents to the time of his entering college, had been the residence of his ancestors from so remote a period as the year 1645. To the good understanding and eminent piety of his mother, he was indebted for those religious principles and impressions, which imbued his opening character, and which, in after life, lent an increasing lustre to his piety. When but a child, he was in the habit of private devotion, and often retired for this purpose to the solitary groves, which surrounded his paternal residence. To the benefit, which he had himself experienced of early christian education, may be traced his deep interest and devoted labors in the cause of early moral and religious instruction.

At the age of fourteen, he was the subject of a severe nervous fever, occasioned by thrusting his arm into a cold spring on his father's estate, in the heat of a summer's day; the shock of which was so great as to produce insensibility, and from the effects of which upon his constitution, he never wholly recovered. This incident, from a conviction not then uncommon, had its influence in determining the character of his future pursuits. Under all the disadvantages of imperfect health, to which from this time he was subject, he was remarkable for cheerfulness and a natural elasticity of mind.

From early life he possessed a strong love of books, and an ardent thirst for knowledge. His course had been originally intended for occupation in the labors of agriculture; but his earnest entreaties, seconded by those of his mother, in connexion with the feeble state of his health, induced a change in his father's purposes, and he was placed to pursue his preparation for college, at Phillips Academy, then under the care of the celebrated Dr. Pemberton. He there immediately gave proof of the industry and talent, which marked his future life, occupying the first rank in a large class, mostly his superiors in order of admission, and indulging his love of study to a degree, which essentially impaired his health, and occasioned the necessity of parental interference. The value he attached to these early advantages is indicated by his persevering practice, through the winter months, of rising at the hour of four, and oftener earlier than later. To the general and private attentions he experienced at the Academy, in the cul-

tivation of a popular and graceful manner of speaking, are to be traced the winning persuasion and captivating eloquence, which subsequently characterized his pulpit performances.

He entered the University at Cambridge, in 1788. His continuance at the University was marked by unexceptionable morals and attendance on college requisitions. He enjoyed the favor of his instructers, and the affection of his fellow students. His high collegiate reputation was sustained more by classic attainments, than by superior proficiency in the exact sciences. He particularly excelled in writing and speaking; and was graduated in 1792, with honors, as one of the most distinguished of his class. The literary reputation, he continued to sustain, appears from his appointment to deliver the oration before the society of PBK, at their anniversary in 1800, when he took for his subject, "A Review of the eighteenth century."

Immediately on leaving college, he commenced the duties of assistant teacher at Phillips Academy, Exeter, N. H. where he continued until August, 1793, studiously directing his reading with a view to his future profession. The succeeding year, he filled with great popularity the office of Principal of Phillips Academy, Andover, pursuing at the same time his theological studies with the Rev. Jonathan French. His review of elementary studies deepened his interest in the general subject of education, and prepared him subsequently to be of important benefit to the public schools in connexion with the duties of his sacred profession. In the No-

vember of 1794, he commenced preaching at Haverhill, and, in the February following, was, by the unanimous choice of church and people, invited to become their pastor. In April an affirmative answer was returned, and he was ordained on the third of June, 1795. The entire unanimity with which he was received by a people, who had been much divided under a preceding ministry, was, to the subject of this notice, a very affecting circumstance. All ages, and persons of very different religious opinions united in expressing an attachment to him almost enthusiastic. It was common for ministers, with whom he exchanged, to remark the happy change in his congregation, both as to the number of worshippers, and the solemnity, with which they attended.

A private journal, which he has left, abounds with expressions of the pious sentiment and benevolent feeling, with which he contemplated this interesting event of his life. "I would never forget thy goodness, O thou, whose tender mercies are over all the works of thy hands. Perpetuate the memory of these things in my mind, and keep alive my sensibility and gratitude." After administering the communion for the first time, in which service his peculiar and impressive manner will be long remembered by many who enjoyed the benefit of his ministrations, he thus writes, "I would never forget the feelings of that first interview with the Church, nor the tears we shed, of which the faulty spectators themselves did not withhold their share. I would remember these feelings and tears, as a constant excite-

ment to prayer that many may be added to our communion of such as shall be saved."

At this period he entertained a belief in the Trinity. His preaching, however, was practical, and had little to do with what he was obliged to consider the mysteries of religion; and the opinions, he had been led to form, from the circumstances in which he commenced his theological career, were shadows, which were destined to be dissipated in a clearer acquaintance with the doctrines of the gospel.

The process, by which he was led to a change of some of his former opinions, was, first, a doubt of their reality, from their apparent inconsistency with what he esteemed the plain doctrines of christianity. This doubt instigated to an anxious inquiry respecting their truth. His personal inquiries weakened the effect of his former impressions, and the fundamental principles of Unitarian belief became the objects of his decided conviction.

He continued in the pastoral care of the society at Haverhill, beloved by an affectionate congregation, his services received with flattering tokens of acceptance in the neighbouring pulpits, and devoting his youthful energies to an earnest, direct, and engaging inculcation of the great truths of the gospel. At this period he was very exact in the distribution of his time. On entering a new year, he writes in his diary—"Let it be my solicitous endeavor this year to redeem time. Let it be my plan to undertake more, and to perform quicker. To carry this design into execution, several things will

be necessary. To take better care of the fragments of time. A portion of the day may be often saved in the morning and evening, which is apt to slide away in other avocations. Less time should be spent in ruminating, or listless study. Let the moments of application be improved, at all times, as they are when special necessity compels to the utmost ardor and activity. Read with attention; converse with spirit and judgment; visit by plan and to some good purpose. Let civility have its place; but let religion and ministerial objects have their turn also. Choose for the pulpit subjects of variety; this will keep curiosity alive, which may be the handmaid of religion; and it may also put me in the way of crossing every hearers prevailing fault, and remind him of a duty, in which he is most of all deficient." The youthful portion of his flock engaged his particular attention, in a course of instruction which he has left in his manuscripts, and prepared with a design, happily directed to enlighten their understandings and interest their affections.

In 1796, he was married to Miss Eunice, eldest daughter of Ebenezer Wales, Esq., of Dorchester. The lamented subject of this notice was particularly remarked by those, who shared his more intimate friendship, as possessing in an eminent degree those qualities which adorn and brighten the scenes of private life. The sweet gentleness, which was never withheld from the humblest stranger, and which excited at once the interest of those whom he transiently met for the first, and perhaps the last season of interview, was peculiarly en-

gaging in the walks of domestic life. With a natural attachment to the objects of nearest affection, as strong as can well be supposed to possess the heart, this attachment was refined and exalted by christian principle. The early inculcation of rational and affecting views of religion was an object of supreme regard. He viewed the affections of the heart as formed for an infinite expansion, and as destined to realize their richest exercise in a world, where sorrow and separation would be unknown. These principles prepared him for a cheerful reception and acknowledgement of private blessings, and to a composed acquiescence in their removal; and it was this character, formed on the proper estimate of the direct distributions of Providence, which enabled him to give a religious direction to the joys and griefs of others.

In May, 1803, from the insufficiency of his support, he relinquished the pastoral charge of the society at Haverhill. The determination to which he was led with anxious application for divine direction, and with daily and nightly consideration, was received by his church and society with the most ample testimonials of love and respect. The concurrence of five neighbouring churches was solicited in the dissolution of the connexion, who cordially recommended him, as an able and faithful minister of the gospel, to other places whither Providence might direct him.

The recent struggles, which his susceptible mind had experienced, in the rupture of ties to which he was accustomed to attach a peculiar sacredness, and his anx-

ieties for a family, to which he was fondly devoted, proved too much for his delicate and sensitive frame. He was consequently compelled to decline any present engagements in his profession, and to seek the recovery of his health by a prolonged journey. In the summer of this year he was invited by the first Congregational society in Beverly, to supply the vacancy occasioned by the removal of Dr. M'Kean to the presidency of Bowdoin College, where, after preaching four Sabbaths, he was unanimously invited by the church and parish to be their pastor. At this period, he was solicited to preach as a candidate to the society in Brattle Street, Boston, which he was compelled to decline from an unwillingness to incur additional obligations, and from the feeble state of his health. Earnest proposals were also made to him from the society in Providence, now under the care of the Rev. Dr. Edes, inviting his settlement with them. He accepted the call at Beverly, and was installed in the following winter, on December 13, 1803. At this time his health was extremely feeble. He was just able to ascend the pulpit, and preached under the disadvantages of evident debility and frequent interruptions. The writer of this imperfect account of his valuable life and labours, has heard him say, that he preached his introductory sermon under the consciousness that it might be his last. Many of his beloved congregation have not forgotten the impressive manner, with which he preached on that occasion from the words, "We all do fade as a leaf." He was soon after confined with severe illness.

Through the prescriptions of an amiable and eminent physician, by whom, under Providence, his useful life was at succeeding times saved and prolonged, he was restored to comparative health, and enabled to enter upon the active and successful discharge of the arduous duties of his large and extended parish.

With a debilitated frame, but a mind ardent and bent on high degrees of usefulness, he entered on this enlarged sphere of labour. His first efforts were followed with an increased seriousness in his society. In August, 1804, he writes—"My labours have been apparently blest more than in any former period. The serious of the society have expressed to me their joy and gratulation; the whole assembly appears more solemn and attentive and full than formerly." In February, 1805, he writes—"The additions to the church in less than a year have been nearly fifty, and they seem to adorn their profession." The mode of preaching, which was instrumental in these results, was eminently practical. Religion was with him a deep personal feeling, founded on a delicate and tender sense of the divine mercies. It was this feeling, that he laboured to inspire in others. Hence his preaching was characterized by the closeness of its application to the heart and conduct, and its topics often suggested by passing events in his parish. An intimate acquaintance with the situation and wants of his hearers was the source of his successful appeals from the pulpit. It was because his addresses were founded on known circumstances in the experience of those whom he ad-

dressed, that he felt sure of touching a responsive string. In his pulpit exercises, as well as in private, he preserved a happy medium between an inactive state of religious feeling, and excited enthusiasm. For this reason, he was enabled to exert peculiar influence in seasons of excitement. His pure piety gave him influence over the most unenlightened fervour. His reasonable and evangelical delineations of duty exerted a persuasive power over the most enlightened. It was his constant aim to keep alive in his parish a temperate tone of serious piety, equally removed from indifference and fanaticism. In a letter at this period, he writes,—"I doubt not but you have remarked, that those persons who are most awakened about religion, are most apt to censure warmly. Indeed, all their feelings are warm; they can say and do nothing very moderately; they may at such a moment be transported to almost anything. I often suggest this remark, the justice of which is always felt, that religion has more to do with the heart than the head; that it consists more in sweetness of affections, than in the knowledge of mysteries and dark questions; that therefore they need not angrily censure others for their opinions, nor be ruffled by the hard judgment, which others may pass upon their religious state, merely on account of their opinions. Such mild suggestions have much effect, and I have often the pleasure to hear my sentiments of this kind repeated from one to another as their own."

At this period, he felt himself under the necessity of often speaking without much writing, and came to the

conclusion, that a minister, in order to be in the highest degree useful to his people, must form the habit of preaching both with written and unwritten discourses. With this conviction he determined to give a course of expository lectures in the Town Hall, and began in March, 1806. The plan of these lectures is thus stated by himself—"designed to show the history and doctrines of Christ in connexion, and to enforce them upon my hearers, in a practical and pathetical, rather than in a learned and theoretical manner." In a note he adds,—"Some have professed to be much enlightened and quickened by them, which encouraged me to go on with them, till the Town Hall could not contain the assembly, and we came to this place,"—the church. In a letter written many years afterwards, he speaks of these lectures having been to himself a delightful and profitable exercise, and to his people one of the most popular and useful services he had ever rendered.

In February, 1807, he lost his excellent mother. His filial grief was expressed on this occasion in a sermon to his congregation from the words,—"I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." The following extracts from a private letter, while they constitute a just tribute to her worth, may illustrate the tender sensibility and christian submission, with which he bowed to the most painful visitations.

"Our consolations rise out of the review of as pure a life as is ever witnessed. She had prepared for death by a whole life of constant and lively devotion. If ever children in the world had occasion, we have, to rise up and call our mother blessed. Let us strive after

her high attainments in faith, in temper, in devotion, in heavenly-mindedness, in liberality to the poor.—But what virtue, or what grace can I name, in which she had not attained excellence. I have been to spend alone a few minutes in surveying her pale but beautiful countenance; and while contemplating it, endeavoured to impress on my mind her recollected counsels, and resolved never to forget the mercy of God to me in such a mother. Let us so live, that our death may be calm and peaceful; and that we may ascend at last to the happy world, where we trust she is renewing her devotions with purer joy and brighter fervor; and where we may be the crown of her rejoicing forever."

In 1809, he preached the annual discourse at Plymouth in commemoration of the landing of the Pilgrims. This discourse was published, and received with favorable marks of public estimation. The pledges of his success on this occasion were the warmth of his heart on a subject peculiarly congenial to his habitual sentiments, and an accurate acquaintance with the causes, which led to the establishment of our civil and religious freedom.

The summer of 1810 was distinguished by a second season of religious excitement in his society. His acknowledged ardour in the cause of practical religion, procured him, at this time, the professed affection and tenders of ministerial exchanges from those, from whom he differed materially in many speculative points of religion. The belief of the agency of the Divine Spirit in the work of human renovation was the ground, in some instances, on which an exchange of services was solicit-

ed. The freedom of professional intercourse, however, became afterwards greatly diminished. And it cost him much painful feeling, on a subsequent occasion, to witness the interference of a foreign and unsolicited council in the affairs which pertained to an independent Church; and which violated, as he believed and maintained, the original purity of congregational discipline.

The late sentiments of one, who had experienced so long and peculiarly the effects of religious excitements, cannot be without interest. An address, which he made in the Berry Street conference on the day of election, 1827, and which, although wholly unpremeditated, produced an universal sentiment of thrilling interest and enthusiastic approbation, unfolded the results of his experience, and the rules of his conduct on these difficult occasions. I find, in his private letters, opinions on the same subject with great plainness expressed. In May, 1826, he writes to the pastor of another society. "You will do wisely to improve your time in deepening the seriousness of your flock, and in leading forward to ordinances as many of the worthy as you can; while you have the aid of example in those, who have already come, and before your flock may settle down in a more cold and formal state. The Orthodox have now few to join their churches, except in what is technically called revivals; and the effervescence of such a season, while it often brings excellent persons into the church, frequently throws up to notice, and ranks with professors, those who ultimately bring disgrace upon them. It is far more desirable to have additions from

the sober on reflection, than from high excitement; and that persons should be coming in, one, two, and three, at a communion season, than in tens and twenties." And in another letter to the same, he writes—"I am much gratified with the religious state of your parish, the increased seriousness and attention to ordinances, and all in so calm and rational a manner. A gradual and continual increase of the number of professors is better than to see an excited multitude coming in together. Sympathy and passion, the social principle in one form or another, have so much to do in a general excitement, that you know not how much of enlightened and solid principle may have to do with the movement, nor how little may remain when the wind has gone by."

In the opening of the year 1818 his health became in a degree affected by some hidden cause, directly or indirectly connected with the lungs. In the summer he resorted to a journey for relief, a means by which he had often been strengthened, in former instances, under the wasting labours of his profession. The cause of his debility was not removed by the application of the remedy, to which it had usually yielded. Being on the verge of winter, and in a profession, which demanded exposure in all the variety of weather, by night and by day, physicians, in whose judgment he placed the highest confidence, advised his removal to South Carolina, to pass the difficult season; and with this advice he felt it his duty to comply.

His purpose was expressed to his congregation in an address, in which he reminded them of the unanimity,

affection and respect, with which he had been received among them, and which for fifteen years of his ministry had continued undisturbed; exhorted them to unity and a continued attendance on the institutions of worship; solicited a remembrance in their private and social devotions; and expressed the expectation that the period of their separation would not be long.

He sailed from Boston for Charleston, S. C. October 28. His diary of the voyage pleasingly illustrates his habits of observation, and the impression which objects new and unusual produced upon his mind, as well as the deep feelings of piety, which he was accustomed to associate with the providential occurrences of life.

In crossing the Gulf Stream, he was involved in a terrific tempest in the dead of night. "On the third, we hailed the sabbath, all with tokens of respect, and some manifestly with solemn joy. At 12, the cabin was arranged and filled for divine service. The usual exercises, at the request of the captain and passengers, were performed. We had excellent singing and performers enough. I addressed my little congregation from a part of the mariner's Psalm, 107, and let the current of thought rise out of the scene around us, and the interesting experience of the preceding days. On the whole, the sabbath seemed not unlike those blessed days, when I have gone with the multitude to the sanctuary." Another season of weekly religious exercises occurred during the passage, which the rough and cold state of the weather prevented from duly observing. On this he remarks—"We know not the blessedness

of a regular sabbath before we are deprived of it. I believe the regret was general; several expressed as much to me. I regretted it the more, as a week had suggested to me, I thought, a peculiarly happy plan of addressing my little parish."

After a tempestuous passage, Nov. 9th, he was greeted with a view of that nightly beacon of the coast, which was to guide him to the warm reception of many friends, who were waiting with distinguished hospitality his arrival in Charleston. "At this point," he says, "I desire to pause, and offer my grateful acknowledgement to God my preserver. The earth is full of his goodness; so is also the great and wide sea. I have seen his works and his wonders in the deep. I would not have seen less; scarcely with safety could I have seen more. Every new scene of my life gives me but further cause to love him as an unwearied benefactor, and to confide in his future mercy with unwavering trust. While I was tossed on the mighty billows, in the conflict of wind with a headlong current, amidst incessant and vivid flashes of lightning, and quick peals of thunder, I felt strangely tranquil and safe. Adored be his name, more than once in my life, when sorrows were most sudden and overwhelming, or dangers most appalling, I have been upborne in his arms, and lifted above the storm. Propitiously may he grant, in the last solemn hour, the same gracious support, the same unspeakable consolation."

On his arrival in Charleston, he took lodgings in a commodious situation, where he continued to experi-

ence the kindest attention during his residence in the city. "In such a family," he writes, "I find much to remind me of my own dear home, and of the general plan, which I have long pursued, of giving to my children the best education in my power; a property which is far more likely than any other to be permanent, and ensure support." He received the most flattering attentions from much of the most refined and literary society of the city, and by a singularity of courtesy, was welcomed to the pulpits of different communions, a courtesy, from which the progress of controversial opinions, on a subsequent visit to the city, excluded him. "It has not a little," he writes, "enlarged my affection and respect to christians of different denominations, to see them in their respective sanctuaries."—On his first preaching in the Archdale Church, he says, "My heart melted with tenderness at the thought of a dear people left in tears, and at that moment, I doubted not, bowing as with one heart in prayer for their sick and absent pastor. It was a touching circumstance that I occupied the pulpit of a brother,* who had himself left his flock, in a wretched and almost hopeless state of health, to visit the warm springs in Virginia. From sad reverie I was roused by the clerk, who, agreeably to custom, opened the services by singing my favorite Eaton. This was followed by Hymn 2d and Devizes, in the hymns I set; and I could not force back to their fountain the flowing tears." He found much satis-

* Rev. Mr. Foster.

faction to his benevolent feelings in witnessing the various charitable and humane institutions of the city. A stranger, from a part of the continent, where the vices and miseries of slavery are unknown, with his benevolent feelings, could not but be deeply interested in investigating the general condition of twelve or thirteen thousand slaves in the city. The opinion was favorable, which he was led to form of the comparative comforts of their condition and their religious privileges.

A short period was now past at the Elms, the country seat of Henry Izard, Esq. at a distance of seventeen miles from the city, in whose hospitable and accomplished family he found every thing calculated to soothe and comfort a mind liable to dejection, in a state of exile from an endeared family and people. During his residence at Charleston, he enjoyed the society and preaching of the late Rev. Mr. Foster. On Dec. 27, he writes, "I attended the Archdale Church, and heard Mr. F. Every serious man after service, I think, might have said with the arraigned apostle—"After the manner which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." His discourse was ingenious, very serious and impressive. There is an originality and neatness, which might sustain rigorous criticism. His elocution, though injured by his cough, is the most natural, appropriate and affecting that I have heard in the city."

After a residence of about two months in Charleston, he became an inmate in the family of Mr. James Legare, on John's Island, where he experienced the tenderest and most devoted attentions. In allusion to this

period, he writes,—"It was a merciful arrangement in providence,which gave me, for a third part of my time, a residence in the country. It was there I enjoyed the purest and most balmy air, a constant and salutary exercise, the comforts of social intercourse and of religious friendship. And there for a short season, I resumed cares ever delightful to me, the charge of a little parish. One exercise only on the Sabbath was requested of me, and this accorded with the state of my health and strength." In a letter of March 7th, 1819, he writes,—"I have been spending a couple of months on John's Island, a lovely spot in the vicinity of this city. I feel grateful to a kind Providence for a call into a situation adapted to promote health and spirits, while it afforded me a little congenial occupation. The tokens of private friendship, on the island, have been of the most comforting and salutary nature; and I feel much pleasure in the hope that, through the blessing of God, these months of affliction and separation from my flock and family will not prove a blank in my life."

During his residence in this delightful retreat, he made frequent excursions, on interesting occasions, to the city. A rich and copious journal, which he prepared for the entertainment of his family and friends, and which is rendered less suited to the public eye only by the considerable period which has since elapsed, contains a mass of intelligent observation on subjects and incidents, which fell under his notice during his residence in Charleston, and his subsequent journeys through some of the most interesting sections of the

southern portion of the country, conveyed in a minute detail, and with a peculiar felicity of description. The writer of this notice deeply regrets, that the more appropriate demands of his task preclude the power, consistently with its proper limitation, of availing himself, in a more parttcular degree, of the contents of this journal.

At the close of March, he left Charleston on a journey, by land, to Savannah, furnished with letters to the most respectable planters in the low country, which afforded him an opportunity of observing the manners and customs of this important class of the southern community. Early in April, he arrived at the banks of the Savannah, and embarked for the city. After a short residence, he returned to Charleston, and in the month of May, commenced his solitary journey homeward. By means of a map constructed from hints supplied by one familiar with his route, he was directed to the most interesting objects. His health was invigorated by the rich luxuriance and balmy air of the season. In the course of this journey he made an excursion to the mountains of Virginia. While among them, he thus writes in his diary:—"May 29th, the latter part of the morning's ride the clouds gathered, and I *enjoyed* a mountain storm. The peals of thunder were frequent, but different from what I had ever heard. They seemed like the discharges of cannon—an explosion, without the rolling and rumbling noise which is long heard in the low country. It began to rain just as I had ascended a lofty hill above Black Water, where I was in a situation to see the storm to infinite advantage. It is an

open hill of great height, and commands a distant view of the mountains for three quarters of the horizon. The exhibition lasted during the whole afternoon, from 12 o'clock. The lightning was very vivid, and the thunder loud. But such was the extent of the vast amphitheatre, in which the clouds played their parts, that all sorts of weather were seen at the same time. In the west, a black cloud rolled over a mountain, pouring down from its bosom a torrent of rain, which falling on the forest, gave a noise like a cataract. The blackness of the cloud was relieved by the purest streams of lightning, commonly darting straight and perpendicularly, and probably levelling some pride of the forest. In the east where Grassy Hill, five hundred feet at least in height from its immediate base, a regular even ridge of seven miles in length, reared its back, the clouds were at once sublime and beautiful. There were to be seen several perpendicular strata, and some of them perceptibly flying in opposite directions, unless there was an optical fallacy—the nearer flitting so much faster than the more remote as to produce the deception. On the near side of the ridge, a skirt of the raining cloud brushed along, enveloping the scene in blue vapour. A little in front of it was a second stratum, that trailed along on the top of the ridge, the bottom of the trail catching like a vesture on the top of the trees that seemed to delay it for a moment; and, loosening again, it was brushed forward by the wind *through interstices of this cloud*, and in front of it fair weather clouds were seen of all colours, and the clear blue sky.

But description cannot possibly give an adequate idea of the enchanting perspective.

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"May 3. The Sabbath. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of Hosts! As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so my heart panteth for thee. My soul thirsteth for the courts of the Lord,' cried David, when he fled from Jerusalem and the sanctuary, to escape the sword of his unnatural son. Something of this pain I feel on these mountains. No pleasant sound of the church-going bell is echoed from these heights and through these vallies. I inquire in vain for a place of worship within my reach. No heaven-directed spire has greeted my eye since I left Columbia, except the Moravian, in a range of more than three hundred miles, and but a few churches of any description. While those I best love and whom it is my delight to serve in the gospel, are assembled in the house of their solemnities, I must wander among the mountains, to see God in his sublime works, whose goings I have delighted to see in the sanctuary.

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"June 1. Passed on to the neighbourhood of the Peaks of Otter. With much labor we reached the summit, an immense pile of rocks. There were different clusters of rocks, several of which we climbed, some of them with difficulty. The rocks on the top seem to have been the subject of some great convulsive disaster. Every particle of earth has been washed from them to a considerable distance from the summit. They

lie in irregular piles of vast size. Nearly half of the grand rock is parted from the other half, leaving a crevice of a foot, down which you can see a great depth. Said my landlord in the evening—"No man can see the Peak of Otter, and disbelieve a flood." The visitants with me adverted to the flood, as the grand agent in the waste scene around us. Another circumstance occurred to my eye on that elevation with great force, as confirming the conjecture. It is the *form* of the mountains generally. They are fluted from top to bottom, that is, lie in up and down ridges and vallies;—not such as might have been effected by showers, nor these ever so frequently repeated. Among perhaps a thousand mountains and swells in view, there were none which were not thus marked.

"It would be difficult in a volume to sketch every thing interesting in this vast prospect. The fatigue of the ascent is compensated by obtaining a correct view of this mountainous country. Nearly three quarters of the horizon, from north-east by west round to south-east, as far as the eye can see, is mountainous country, interspersed with rich and cultivated vallies. Three extensive bold ridges run parallel with each other from south-west and north-east. Thus this country from the Peak of Otter, appears like the ocean, seen from some immensely high beacon on the beach, when tossed by a tempest—only the waves in elevation bear but a mean porportion to these towering swells.

"While on the top of the mountain we saw a delightful phenomenon, novel to us all, a rainbow below us;—

an arch it was not, but a straight line extended on the forest eight or ten miles, vivid with the colours of the ordinary bow. It was at first compact, occupying but little width of space, but gradually spread and grew fainter, till it melted away."

From this journey, he returned with renovated health to resume the duties of his beloved profession. But the interim of his absence had been marked by melancholy changes in the domestic circles of those, to whom he was accustomed to break the bread of life. The removal of thirteen communicants by death during his absence, occasioned a discourse from the text in Lamentations—"The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to her solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate." The season of ministerial service, which followed his return, is to be considered perhaps the most laborious and successful of his life. He devoted the moments of leisure from parochial duties to studies, to whose direction the controversies of the day in some degree contributed. He always engaged with great pleasure in studies connected with the sacred criticism of the Bible. He availed himself of every means within his reach for the elucidation of its contents. His deep reverence for the sacred oracles imparted a hallowed charm to these pursuits; and he was never more delighted than when fresh light broke in upon his mind in relation to any single text, whose true meaning was but imperfectly understood before. His studies were consecrated by a strong feeling of piety, and he brought to the pulpit a habit and manner, which evinced how

deeply they had employed his hours in private ;—a manner indicative of a mind, which has with great justice on another occasion been characterized as one "in whom dwelt the words of Christ richly in all wisdom"—a manner, to which the epithet bestowed on a primitive defender of christianity was more than in an ordinary sense applicable, as "eloquent and mighty in the scriptures." His preaching was much enforced by considerations peculiar to christianity. A partiality for authors of the class of Baxter and Doddridge produced a tinge of thought and expression, which gave interest to his sermons, and led to what he deemed a more useful impression, without the adoption of those peculiarities, which he might not approve. Whenever he deviated from the accustomed manner of his preaching, and assumed topics bordering on the region of controversial discussion, it was with the fixed design rather of "preaching up his own sentiments, than of preaching down the sentiments of other men." It formed, however, no leading part of his plan in preaching to awaken in his people a love of polemic discussion, or to enlist their passions in the controversies of the day. He aimed, rather, to make them serious and to preserve them calm; and the object of his public and private instructions was to lead them to love their christian brethren of various sentiments and persuasions, and to engage them in searching their own hearts, rather than in investigating the errors and censuring the motives of others.

In the course of this period of his professional life, he was called to appear on many public occasions. His advice was often sought in cases of an ecclesiastical nature, and his services required in his own vicinity and at a distance, in the induction of others to the sacred office. In 1818, he preached the Dudleian Lecture at Cambridge, and received the degree of Doctor in Divinity, from the same University, in 1821. In August, 1823, he delivered the annual sermon in Federal Street Church, before the society for promoting Theological Education in Harvard University. No object appeared to him more important than a liberal provision of the means of supplying an intelligent ministry adequate to the demands of an expanding and improving state of society.

The habits of unremitting application, which were formed in early life, he continued to the latest period of his professional course. He practised, with only unavoidable exceptions, the general rule of meeting with fresh preparation the weekly demands of the pulpit, till his health compelled a relinquishment of public effort. In a letter of Nov. 1826, he writes,—"In ten months I have written more sermons than in any other twelve since I left H., and I was sure I was never in better spirits, nor more capable of duties and conversation." In May, 1827, he delivered the discourse at the Convention of Congregational Ministers; and in near succession, the sermon at the installation of his brother in law, Rev. A. Abbot, at Peterborough, N. H. These discourses, which were published, are a substantial tes-

timony to the genuine liberality of his feelings, and the characteristic gentleness, which pervaded his whole private and pastoral life.

The unremitting labours of the past year, in connexion with the occasions of a public and engrossing nature, on which he was called to officiate, made serious inroads on his health. In the autumn, his former complaints returned. He sought relief from the damp winds of the shore, by retiring to the more balmy air of the interior. The rainy state of the season rendered his excursion fruitless to the permanent recovery of his health; and he continued to suffer under a painful cough, which deprived him of the necessary refreshment of sleep, and wore with a wasting irritation on his frame. Under the attacks of disease, he preserved a peculiar serenity of mind. His natural cheerfulness never deserted him. So peculiar was his serenity, as insensibly to create the delusion that no real occasion for alarm existed. In a letter of Sept. 21st, he writes—"For one thing I cannot be sufficiently thankful; my bad nerves inspire no gloom. In no period of my life have I enjoyed so much tranquillity, peace, nay, let me say it, joy, religious joy, as in the last two or three months. In the review of my life, the goodness of God appears wonderful to me. My course, as far as Providence is concerned, from childhood seems a path of light, without a cloud of darkness—an unvaried scene of mercy."

At this period he made to his congregation substantially the following summary of his past life and labours. "In leaving my affectionate and beloved people at H.

I felt the parting so severely, that it brought upon me an inflammatory disease, and, with the arrow in my side, I came to this town. For five years I was the subject and almost the victim of disease. I have been much of the time an invalid; until nine years ago, a cough was fixed. After suffering a summer of wasting illness, my physicians advised to a southern climate, and at parting, your tears told me, that you had fears that I should never return. God was better than your fears, and restored me to eight years of the most vigorous labours, I think, of my whole life.

It is not quite twenty-four years since I became your minister. * * In meeting the demands of numerous occasions in my ministry, I have been under the necessity of often speaking without written discourses. I would remark, that very many of these have cost me more intense thought and intellectual labour than written discourses, and in the view of many who heard them have been my most useful efforts. * * My life among you has been indeed a laborious one, but for that very reason the more pleasant. Occupation in important offices is really the happiness of life, and idleness its misery. My business has been to keep you strong and united as a parish, and to advance your spiritual knowledge and experience, and, so far as it rested with me, to secure your salvation. And now after this retrospection of my labours, have I not occasion to look up to God with wonder and grateful astonishment? * * In thinking over these things the last two months, I have been overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness to

me; and have often said, if he calls me away, I will rejoice to go; I cannot have a reluctant thought or feeling. Yet if he spare me longer, I will try to serve him better. Neither have I one painful fear that He, who has shown me so much mercy in this world, will withhold his mercy from one who loves him, in the world to come."

The labours, of which he speaks in the foregoing address to his congregation, may be estimated, when it is remembered, that his duty was appointed in a parish consisting of 470 families; all of whom it was his rule to visit, if possible, once in a year, independently of his assiduous and devoted attention to the sick and afflicted—often called from his pillow to minister to their wants; and the active and leading influence, he exerted in the public schools, involving the most wasting services in the worst season of the year.

When in the autumn of 1827, his health became so uncertain, as to decide the necessity of seeking the relief of a milder climate, he took the following leave of his affectionate church and people:—"My health is again in that state, which demands the palliating and restoring influence of a milder clime. From the prostrate condition, to which I was reduced in midsummer, I have in part risen by recess from labour and care, and by exercise and milder air in the country. The cough, however, is not materially abated; for a few weeks, indeed, it is increased. * * I feel, therefore, called in Providence to leave the pleasant scene of my labours, and to employ those means for the recovery of my

health, which, in very similar circumstances on a former occasion, God was pleased to crown with success. I wish my beloved people to be assured that I shall omit no care or exertion; and farther, that I leave them with good hope, through the mercy of the great Physician, of returning to them in such health, as to renew my labours. If He should order otherwise, it is my prayer and my humble hope, that I may cheerfully submit to his blessed will. In any event, I do, with great satisfaction, commit and confide my beloved family, and church, and people to His holy keeping, "who is able to do for them abundantly above all that I can ask or think."

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"In this day of fastidious and capricious feeling, permit me to hope, that nothing may occur to impair the harmony and true interest of the parish, in the necessary absence of the pastor. I have overwhelming proof how tenderly you regard his feelings. When he is far away in the south, and perhaps in a tropical climate to regain his health, in order that he may spend it again in your service; it will be a reviving cordial to him to hear of your full assemblies; to hear that *none* forsake the assembling of themselves together, or curiously *wander* into other pastures. * * * I have reason to hope better things of my beloved people. When I was absent before, it contributed to my comfort, it contributed to my *health* in my distant exile, to hear of your admirable conduct as a parish generally; of your harmony, of your prudence, of your regard to the com-

mon interest, of the little sacrifices of some, even on a week-day, to attend the sacramental lecture, and to furnish music for the occasion, that the pastor might not hear of any thing to depress his spirits, or to check his progress towards health. None but he who is *a thousand miles* from all he holds most dear on earth, can tell the efficacy of such medicine, when it arrives.—It is the cup of cold water to the fainting disciple, which will not go unrewarded.

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"I wish you to understand, that, through the goodness of God, I do not despond of recovering my health by the means contemplated; nor do the physicians despond, who have, with a care and solicitude to me truly affecting, watched my symptoms for three months. Indulge me to hope, that you will remember me in your prayers while on the sea, and in the distant land of my exile; in the sanctuary remember me, and in your family devotions, and in your secret intercessions. Wherever I go, I shall bear my beloved people on my heart; and God forbid, that I should cease to make mention of you always in all my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, peace, unity, love, till I see you again; and may that meeting be happy *here*, or in his blessed presence above."

He sailed from Boston on the 28th of October. The voyage was marked by favorable circumstances, with the exception of occasional violence of winds, which presented the ocean under some of its more sublime ap-

pearances. "I spend hours" he writes, "in watching with delight and admiration its sublime, and sportive and variegated surface. What is the tumble of the superfluous flood of the lakes over the rock, to this boundless view of waters in tremendous agitation around and beneath us? Now yawns the abyss, and our bark plunges fearlessly in, as if sinking to the bottom, and again her buoyant form rises with grace and majesty on the mountain wave. On every side the wave is seen rising higher and higher, till its beetling top breaks over, and its silvery foam, lustrous with sunbeams, dashes far and wide. These spectacles are simultaneous all around you, so that you seem unawares to have run into the midst of a thousand breakers."—The sabbath, at particular request of the ship's company, was welcomed with appropriate services, in which the topicks of address, with his usual directness, were drawn from surrounding objects, and were followed with apparent salutary effects. He arrived at Charleston, Nov. 6th.

On his arrival in Charleston, he resumed his residence in the family of Mrs. S. where he had boarded during his former visit to the city. He experienced a renewal of the most flattering attentions, and the kindest and most affectionate regard in every thing that could contribute to his comfort. He soon afterwards directed home the following letter.

"To the Church and Congregation of my pastoral charge.

"For twenty-four years, my mind and heart have been employed in devising the best means for your highest

welfare. To this, I have been under the most sacred obligations; yet I hope I have done it, not by constraint only, but of a willing mind. And now, while by the righteous providence of God, I am far from you, it is not possible, that the habit of my mind should be changed, or that I should think of you without the tenderest regard, and the deepest solicitude.

"When the sabbath dawns upon me, fondly do I wish, that the day might be spent in the midst of that loved assembly, I have so often addressed on those subjects, which constitute the unsearchable riches of Christ. Gladly would I lead you to the throne of mercy, and join with heart and voice in your songs of praise, which seem uttered with a sweeter accent than I hear among strangers of any other assembly. But it must not be; seas roll between us, and I can only bear my beloved people on my heart to God in secret. * * * And let me beseech you, my dear friends, to improve the means of grace which Providence sends you in my absence; to be constant in the house of God, in the hours of worship and instruction, and to engage in the duties of the day and place, as those who have souls to be saved or lost. If thus you improve the season of my absence, God may restore me to you in health, and cause me to return in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, and renew those seasons of mercy, when converts are multiplied as the drops of morning dew.

It gives me pleasure to inform you, that God has dealt very mercifully with me ever since I left the shores of New-England. * * * We passed safely

with favouring gales along that dangerous coast which, in July last, was strewed with wrecks; a fearful monument of the tempest being still visible as we passed. Arriving in safety at our desired haven, I was immediately greeted with the hospitality of new friends, as well as old, in this city, so far famed and so justly, for its kindness to the stranger and invalid. Every thing is arranged in the best manner to attain the important object of coming. * * * I find the weather, however, to be more changeable than formerly, and the dust of the dry and sandy streets unfriendly. I shall probably spend some time with a friend in the country. I trust a slow and gentle progress towards health is perceptible. In the best weather I cough little; in unfavourable weather I am still painfully exercised. This circumstance has led me to think seriously of a still better climate in Cuba. After some delay, to give a fair trial of the climate, which benefited me so much on a former occasion, if it does not fully answer my expectations, I shall cheerfully follow the leadings of a kind Providence, and go to a still milder and less variable clime. Since I have been in this city, it has been painful to witness the desolations of death, since I was here before, and especially in the course of the last summer. My visits have been generally those of sympathy and condolence; and often have I been met with tears of speechless emotion by the surviving members of families which I left full and happy, now robbed by death of half their number. * * * The sickness in this city has been very extensive, and has prevailed in parts,

hitherto considered as refuges from danger. Two thousand persons have been sick at once; but God has softened the calamity beyond former example. The fever has been of a milder type, or has more readily yielded to remedies, so that the victims have not been in proportion to the subjects. Yet, my dear friends, how much more gently have we been chastened in our comparatively healthy village! How many of our families have been preserved from death the nine years, in which I find so much desolation to have taken place in families here very dear to me; yet every season has been marked with distressing bereavement among you, and many have been called away in the bloom of life, generally lamented, and losses irreparable to their immediate families. Let these solemn facts deeply impress our minds. A few years more will effect great changes in our families;—some of us shall have gone to our great account and to our eternal retribution; others will remain a little longer, to lament the loss, and prepare to follow us, or perhaps to continue their follies and to be surprised in unpreparedness at last. But God forbid, that any of us should waste the fleeting moments of life in merely worldly care or sinful pleasures, while the soul is left in danger, and the joys of heaven neglected or forfeited. You know not from what an anxious heart these thoughts are springing. It grieves me to think, that I cannot from sabbath to sabbath press upon your minds the things of your peace. Let not the feeble efforts of a letter be lost; it goes from the heart, may it reach the hearts of that dear as-

sembly, whose everlasting happiness is the fondest wish and continual prayer of their absent pastor. My thoughts continually visit you: they range from house to house, and from street to street, and from the centre to the borders, and even the most distant family, which God has visited with great and repeated afflictions. I have the sick in earnest and devout remembrance, and should esteem it a high privilege if I could sit by their beds of languishing, and aid their last exercises, and fervently commend them to the divine mercy, and direct them to that compassionate Being, who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax, but with open arms invites the weary and heavy laden to him for everlasting rest.

"You will indulge me to hope for a remembrance in your prayers. In concluding this brief epistle, I give you the words of the apostle:

"Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

"Your affectionate and devoted pastor.

A. Abbot."

The winter at Charleston was uncommonly mild, and the state of his health enabled him often to aid the labours of the pastor of a society, to whose opinions his own were most congenial, and to gratify his curiosity by attention to objects of interest in the city. In the beginning of December, when the heat and sands of the city interrupted his accustomed exercise, and the frequent testimonials of affectionate hospitality required

exertions to which his health was inadequate, he was induced to embrace an early tendered invitation of Mr. L. to resume a residence in his affectionate and hospitable family on John's Island. Here, in the bosom of affectionate friendship, he experienced every attention, which could relieve the pain of absence from his family and flock, and contribute to his personal comfort and the recovery of his health. The space of a month was passed in this delightful retreat, when a change in the season, and the prevalence of cold winds on the island determined his resolution of embarking for Cuba.

On the eve of embarking, he thus writes to his family;—"Yesterday I received your delightful and most unexpected letter. How good is God, to preserve us at home and far away in health; for so I may now almost say of myself. I have a little cough, as you know I used to have before April last. In good weather it is little or no trouble." * * * "I am cheerful, and I hope grateful. I expect to sail tomorrow for Matanzas."

He sailed on Feb. 9. In a letter from sea he writes, —"There is a new sky over me. The clouds seem differently formed, and of a more watery aspect than I have been wont to see. Much alarm was excited during the passage by a perilous incident. At midnight the whirl of a water-spout passed so near the vessel, as to fill the sails in a contrary direction, and broke so near, as either directly, or by a rebound from the ocean, to drench with a portion of its water the deck. On the morning of the sixteenth, the high hills of Cuba

were descried." On the day following his arrival at Matanzas, he left the city, by a romantic river, for the plantation of a friend, a short distant in the interior. "Thus suddenly" he writes, "was I transferred to the country, much better adapted to health, and to one of the most picturesque and delightful scenes in the world, a valley of plantations walled in by mountains, and seeming one extensive garden of richest fruits and flowers." Here, some weeks were passed in society chiefly of Americans, and most of them from New-England. He was much impressed by the scenes of grandeur and novelty around him. "I bless God," he writes, "for his mercy by sea and land. I rejoice in my removal to a still more auspicious climate, and to a world inexhaustible in novelties. I see nothing old—all is new; it is as if I were transferred to a new world. It seems like gentle summer, fanned with refreshing gales." During his residence in the interior, he made an excursion, in company with scientific and intelligent friends, to the bay of Cardenas and the mountains of Hacana in the east. "We were not altogether fortunate," he writes, "in the morning, a thin fog lingering in the horizon. But the ocean at the bay of Cardenas was perfectly visible from these mountains, and the form of the island lying N. E. at the distance of about twenty miles. It is certain that the eye here spans the island at a single station; and the observer can entertain no doubt, that a line of forty-five or fifty miles would reach from the Caribbean sea to the Atlantic. The mountains extend in an irregular way W. 120 miles, and E.

about 6 miles. Beyond this limit, to the east, the island is a level country about 300 miles, and from sea to sea."

His observations were directed under favourable circumstances to the objects of natural, political and religious interest, which this part of the island presented to the stranger. Two following weeks were spent in Matanzas and its vicinity under equal advantages. At this period he writes, "I have the pleasure to assure you that I am daily improving in health and strength. Through the great goodness of God, I trust I am invigorating a debilitated constitution in a manner, which may enable me to be farther useful to my family and people. My cough is not absolutely extinct; I do not think I have reason to expect that it will be so, till the tabernacle itself shall be taken down. But experience since my former excursion at the south, leads me to hope that it may be kept under by general good health, and care not to *over do*, as I did last summer. How I long, if it may please my Master, to do him service and the cause of Christ, and to be a blessing to my family and my affectionate people. All the strange and beautiful scenes around me cannot divert my thought from "home, sweet home," and from thinking of the dearest country on the globe, the freest people on the earth, and the most enlightened portion of the human family and the most moral. Faults they have, and very many. There is civil dissension and party violence. There is ecclesiastical jealousy and unchristian intolerance, at which the finger of scorn or of triumph is pointed from

lands of civil and ecclesiastical despotism. But, America, "with all thy faults, I love thee still," and, more than all, the land of the Pilgrims; and the spot, where the trees planted by the hand of Endicott, still by their shade and fruits cheer his descendants."

In the month of March, in company with some friends and a Spanish guide, he commenced a journey through the intermediate villages of St Cyrilo, Haruco and Guanamacoa, for Havana. The first part of this route was mostly through a territory occupied as pasturage land, with occasional plantations, and in view of the mountains of San Juan. From St. Cyrilo to Haruco, is a champaign country, with a distant view of hills. From Guanamacca, the white towers of Havana, with the view of its bay and suburbs and surrounding gardens, were visible. After a short stay in Havana, he spent the remaining time of his residence in Cuba, in the vast garden of the island lying between Havana and the mountains of Cusco, and the southern and northern waters, which wash the shores of that section of the island. He was attended almost constantly by friends, who with distinguished hospitality ministered to his health, and directed and facilitated his inquiries. "You will not expect me," he writes at this period from the plantation of a friend in the mountains of San Salvador, "to detail my other three ascents, as I have preserved them for you in MSS.* nor to relate the hospitality and courtesy, with which I am every where greeted. The time is now near, I humbly hope, through

*Letters from Cuba.

the great goodness of God, my Preserver, when I shall embark for my ever dear country, and the spot in that country most of all endeared to my heart by the affectionate friends, who I know will soon expand their arms to receive me. These mountains have done more for me than the plains. There is wonderful life in this mountain air. Let invalids, who come to this fine island, always seek its high grounds. It is almost sufficient to raise the hectic sufferer to tone and health."

Soon after this period, his original purpose of embarking from Matanzas directly for home was changed to the plan of sailing from the Havana for Charleston. The sultry season had now advanced; which caused an anxiety, for the sake of those to whom he was dear, to leave the place which had been so fatal to many from northern climates. After one or two days spent in Havana, his temporary delay occasioned by the difficulty of procuring passports from the Government house, he embarked Monday morning, May 26th, for Charleston. In a letter from sea, May 28th, he writes —"We passed the Moro with a fine breeze, and left fever, cholera, and dingue behind us. We rejoice the more in our escape from Havana, as the two days we have been out have been extremely hot. We have great reason for gratitude to God for all his goodness. In reviewing my residence in Cuba, I can see nothing but an uninterrupted series of divine benefits conferred on a wandering invalid." May 30th. "There is a fine change in our prospects since yesterday. We are in a fair way to get into Charleston to-night or in the

morning. The billows are white crested, and cheerfulness reigns on board. My intention is not to remain a day in C. if there be a vessel to take me northward. I cannot feel thankful enough that I escaped from Havana as I did. On the water I am very well. O! I do indulge the hope that I am to be spared to labour a little longer in the vineyard, and in the chosen spot where my tabernacle has been twenty-four years pitched. * * There is no one thing that gives me so much pain in returning to my beloved country, as to think of its religious dissensions. May the God of peace hush them, and forever preserve my voice from the notes of discord." "Saturday, May 31st. We have had a charming run, and arrived this morning at seven o'clock. The packet sails for New-York on Monday, and I think I shall take passage on board of her, if she is not running over with passengers. Happy am I to touch my natal soil again, and I hope soon to revisit *home, sweet home.* My health on this passage has been fine, and my cough almost extinct. I think, accidents excepted between this and home, that you will think my general health quite as good as before my sickness. Blessed be God, the object of my absence has been attained to a much greater degree than my most sanguine friends could hope."

The excessive heat of the day, and the calls he made on numerous friends in the city were attended with fatigue and exhaustion. On the morning of Sunday he attended the Archdale church, heard the Rev. Mr. Gilman, and partook at his table the Lord's supper.

How affecting was this incident, in thus being permitted to celebrate the dying love of a Saviour, in whose service he had so long, and so successfully laboured! He complained only of weariness, produced by the excitement of the preceding day and the necessary effort, imposed by his situation, of arranging the materials of an extemporaneous discourse; and by reclining at different times till the afternoon service, he was able to officiate. "He preached," writes the Rev. Mr. Gilman, "with great animation and interest from the words, "God said, let there be light;" and particularly fixed our attention by contrasting the spiritual darkness of the region, he had just left behind, with the enjoyment of full and perfect light with which our own country is favored." After an evening spent in affectionate intercourse with his assembled friends, and leaving no impression of any disastrous effect upon his health with those, who attributed his partial indisposition to the excitement and fatigues of his voyage and visit at C., he embarked on Monday in the Othello, for New-York.

The first day of the passage was marked by no indications of declining health. He conversed for hours with his usual spirit, engaging the delighted interest and devoted attentions of fellow passengers by the affability of his manner, and the charm of his conversation. The assiduity, which upheld his declining strength, and smoothed his lonely pillow, when far from the opportunities of kindred sympathy, was rendered by a stranger, whom he now met for the first time, and

whose friendship, from this time the most tender and devoted, was the fruit of advice and sympathy imparted under a recent affliction. He obtained partial relief from resort to medicine. His illness continued at intervals, without material abatement, through the following day, yet it was unattended with any symptoms of alarm or suspicion of decline. Although his debility confined him to the cabin, and even his bed, he was invariably cheerful, and exerted himself to entertain the company, who with affectionate constancy watched by his side to relieve the hours of languor,—exhibiting his box of island curiosities, and contributing in other ways to their gratification and pleasure; and during the night of Friday, when they approached quarantine, many of the passengers who were up during the night, visited his birth, and always found him as free from severity of illness as on the preceding days. On Saturday he rose very early, dressed himself, and went on deck. After reclining for a short time in the cabin, he was advised to return, and went again, with assistance, on the deck, where a cloak and pillows had been spread for him. After resting a few moments, he walked, supported by the arm of a friend, twelve times across the deck. His respiration was observed to be burdened and difficult, which was at the time ascribed to the bracing effect of the fresh air. But immediately on sitting down, he was attacked with bleeding; he begged his friend not to be alarmed; said he was aware, that his old spring complaints had returned with violence, and requested that his wife and family might be

prepared to see him return in still feebler health than he left them, after the sanguine hopes his last letter must have excited. He afterwards expressed the hope that he should be able to write himself. As he grew gradually fainter from the loss of blood, he was asked by one of the passengers—if he felt alarmed ?—"No;" he replied, "I am in the hands of God, and I trust he will take care of me." The hemorrhage increasing, he said no more, but raising his eyes to heaven, and breathing the silent language of intense mental devotion, the pure spirit freed itself of the body, the countenance as serene and peaceful as he had that morning been seen asleep in his birth.

To him may be applied what has beautifully been said of another, whom he resembled in the piety of his character and the suddenness of his departure. "His sun was in its meridian power, and its warmth was most genial, when it was suddenly eclipsed forever. He fell as the standard-bearer of the cross should ever wish to fall, by no lingering decay, but in the vigour and firmness of his age, and in the very act of combat and triumph. His Master came suddenly, and found him faithful in his charge, and waiting for his appearing. His latest opportunities were spent in his Lord's service, and in ministering to his flock. He had scarcely put off the sacred robes, with which he served at the altar of his God on earth, than he was suddenly admitted to his sanctuary on high, and clothed with the garments of immortality."

His remains were interred on Staten Island; an appropriate funeral service was performed by the Rev·

Mr. Miller, and his grave was hallowed by the tears of those, who, but for their respect for his character and sympathy in his death, might be called strangers.

On the intelligence of his death at Beverly, the bells were tolled, a mournful silence pervaded the streets, customary business was in many instances suspended, and the pulpit and church clothed in black for forty days. Appropriate public services were performed at the request of the parish, and a discourse delivered by the Rev. Dr. Flint, in which the characteristic qualities of the lamented subject are portrayed with a discriminating power. How deep was the general sympathy at the sudden prostration of common hopes at the moment when they were highest, may appear from the following extract.—"It is no rare occurrence for a bereaved individual or mourning family to appear within these walls. To-day we have come together, at the call of a mysterious Providence, one entire assembly of mourners, to mingle our tears, our sympathies and prayers, as partakers in a common calamity.

"One mournful and affecting image is present to the thoughts of all,—that of the good shepherd of this bereaved flock and the honored head of this afflicted family fallen the untimely victim of disease, at the moment when recruited health had given promise of lengthened years of usefulness and peace, in the bosom of his beloved charge and household. The aspect of universal sadness and grief, which I see before me, occasioned by this event, admonishes me, that you deplore with no common feeling of bereavement, the unlooked for summons of your religious monitor, guide, counsellor and

friend to his early rest and reward, leaving you, as it has pleased God he should, to mourn over the sudden prostration of hopes, that had been so recently raised almost to the certainty of fruition. * * * And it is, therefore, no small addition to the pain of bereavement, when the loved form of the friend we mourn is laid in a distant grave,—when

> "By foreign hands his dying eyes were closed,
> "By foreign hands his lifeless limbs composed,
> "By foreign hands his lonely grave adorned,
> "By strangers honored, and by strangers mourned."

"The death of a neighbour, or of a casual acquaintance, in the obscurest walks of life, brings a shade of sadness and solemnity over the mind of the most unreflecting and unconnected witness of the event. But God speaks to us with a louder warning and more solemn emphasis, when the eminent and the good are taken away, who have long filled a large space in the public regard, and sustained the most responsible relations that exist in human society. A thousand common objects may, we know, be removed out of their place, without attracting the notice of many observers. But the sudden disappearance of a lighthouse or watch-tower, that had long stood, as a guide to the mariner, or the traveller, cannot take place, without awakening a general interest and attention. And if, as we have all so often seen and felt, the impression be slight and transient, when the living read the lesson of their frailty in the frequent funerals of the promiscuous crowd of all ages, whose existence and exit are alike unknown beyond their immediate vicinity, it is not so, it cannot be

so, when death has selected, as in the instance we mourn, an elevated and shining mark, and, by removing with a stroke a distinguished individual, has deprived, not only a family of its dearest earthly dependence and solace, but a numerous and united people of their spiritual father, and the visible centre and bond of their union; the church and commonwealth of a pillar and an ornament; his brethren in the ministry of a brother, whose presence was to them as the light of the morning, whose friendship and hearty counsel have so often rejoiced their hearts, given ardor to their zeal, wisdom and elevation to their purposes, and imparted a charm, a sweet and hallowing influence, to their intercourse on earth, the remembrance of which they will love to cherish, while they live, as an earnest of the higher and dearer communion, which they hope to share with him in heaven."

The late visits of Dr. Abbot at Charleston had strongly endeared him to that enlightened and hospitable community. "Members of all sects and denominations," writes the Rev. Mr. Gilman, "constantly stop me as I pass through the streets, and express the deepest concern, as if they had lost a father." At a numerous meeting of the worshippers at the second Independent Church, and several other respectable inhabitants of Charleston, the following preamble and Resolutions were submitted and passed:—

"The mournful intelligence recently received of the death of the Rev. Abiel Abbot, whilst on his return to his beloved family and flock, has excited in ev-

ery bosom of this congregation the most unfeigned and heartfelt sorrow.

"When we remember the mild and christian virtues, which adorned the character of that exemplary man, and which won the affections of all who knew him, we cannot but sympathize with his bereaved family and congregation, whose irreparable loss they must long deplore :—

"Resolved, That the Pastor of this church be requested to address a communication to his afflicted family, and offer to them our sincere condolence on the late afflicting dispensation of Divine Providence."

In the circumstances of Dr. Abbot's death, at the moment when the hopes of prolonged usefulness, cherished by his friends and the community, were highest, which gave an almost overpowering weight to the first impulses of grief at the sudden extinction of a light, which shone so bright in the relations of public life, and shed so pure a warmth over the bereft circle of private affection, the consoling conviction, inspired by our holy religion, of the perfect wisdom and benevolence of the Providence which rules events, and the remembrance of that cheerful piety which his own counsels breathed, and his life illustrated, may be suffered to administer their healing balm in mitigating the pains of bereavement. He was summoned to his reward in the meridian of his fame, with no blight coming over his faculties, with no slow and lingering decline. In this he realized the answer of his prayers, and the absence of the only fears, which were associated in his mind with

the idea of dissolution. He was spared the pain of following a daughter, in whom kindred talent, affection and worth were blended, to an early tomb. In these circumstances the devout believer must recognise alleviations, attending his removal, mingled even with the severity of the sudden and overwhelming bereavement.

The lamented subject of this notice was characterized by qualities of mind and heart eminently adapted to usefulness and success in the sacred office. His mind exhibited an union of the various faculties in balanced and harmonious proportion. His education contributed to develope no individual mental quality in remarkable ascendency over the rest. Though endued by nature with fine powers and quick perception, no single quality of the mind seemed to acquire by cultivation an obvious ascendency. His imagination was rich, and his judgment sound. He united patience of research with rapidity of invention. He was unambitious of the glory, which minds, in which the several powers are less balanced and blended, often covet of shining like the meteor with a dazzling brightness, unmindful of the moral disorders, with which its momentary brilliancy may be connected, but consecrated his various gifts by common improvement to the glory of the giver, and laid them on the altar of his God, by an able and faithful discharge of the functions of the sacred office, the object of his early predilection.

In the characteristic qualities of his heart, he exhibited a shining pattern of eminent piety and christian gentleness. His affections, naturally ardent and sus-

ceptible of strong impressions, were early moulded by the influence of pious instruction. Under its habitual discipline, his character exhibited the fruits of an exalted piety. Few have given so complete a surrender of the moral faculties and affections to their bestower. His highest pleasure was in tracing the goodness of God as spread over nature, manifested in his paternal providence, and revealed in the gracious scheme of christianity. The love of God was the ruling principle of his heart. It imbued with a hallowed serenity his whole character. Few have realized a more perfect model of the gentle virtues of the christian character. "Few men," in the merited tribute which has been eloquently paid to his piety and virtues, "have united such purity of life, fervour of devotion, unaffected piety, and generous courtesy, with so much intellectual attainment. Few men have been at once so learned and so modest; so gentle and so sincere; so earnest for the faith once delivered to the saints, and yet so meek and unobtrusive upon the feelings of others; so thoroughly imbued with a sense of the everlasting importance of christianity, and yet so little heated by the spirit of proselytism; so genuine a lover of peace, and yet so warm an advocate of truth."

Dr. Abbot was an eminent lover of religious peace. He believed the essential doctrines of christianity to consist in those broad and fundamental points, which are plain and intelligible to the serious inquirer. He did not believe, that the saving doctrines of the gospel were contained in metaphysical questions, on which

the best and wisest of men have differed. The strictest adherance to principles he conceived to be consistent with an enlarged respect to the cherished opinions of others. He conceived, that in order to the ends of church government, and to a worthy participation of the christian ordinances, no further profession of belief was essential than that of the christian religion, as revealed in the holy Scriptures. He lamented the prevalent spirit of controversy as a source of fruitful evil. "It does not fully relieve my mind," he says in an address before the Berry Street Conference, in May, 1821, "that things are urged to this extremity by those of the opposite part, nor that I believe, that the evils will fall heaviest on those who provoke them, nor that I have hope that truth will be advanced by the conflict.—This state of things is dangerous to the peace and unity of churches and parishes, and has been fatal to some. It is effecting those divisions, more particularly in the country, which weaken the congregational interest, break down that order which has been the glory of New-England, give strength and numbers to sects most distinguished for disorderly and enthusiastic zeal, break up old parishes into such fragments as that none of them can maintain the institutions of the gospel, and thus reduce much of the population to lay-preaching, or, at best, to the instruction of unlettered men, and convert some of the most populous villages in the state, and neighbouring states, to missionary ground.—In such a state of things, brethren, forbearance and discretion are quite as important as ardor in debate, or triumph in conflict."

This liberality of feeling was adapted to conciliate reciprocal respect to his personal opinions. The views of christian truth, which, from the most devout study of the scriptures he entertained, were Unitarian. These sentiments formed the basis of his pure piety, and were the habitual sources of grateful consolation. He regarded the Father, as the author and contriver of the blessings comprehended in the christian economy, and the only proper object of supreme homage. Next to him, whose perfections of nature admit of no comparison, he ascribed exalted dignity to Jesus Christ, as the mediator, by whose death we are reconciled to God. He dwelt, in conforming to the language of scripture, on his character, offices, and death, with affectionate veneration. He disclaimed the doctrine, however, that the death of Christ rendered the Deity propitious, or was a motive inducing him to be merciful, since the scheme itself was an appointment proceeding from his mercy, and deemed suitable in his wisdom as a standing memorial of his inclination to pardon the sinful upon repentance. He regarded with exalted veneration the Saviour, as his appointed agent in the work of creation, the constituted head of his church and kingdom, and the authorized judge of all mankind. But the grace of God in the gospel was that, which in his view constituted its predominant feature. He regarded christianity as containing an estimate of the moral condition of man, which furnished the occasion of humility; as teaching the doctrine of redemption from that condition by the ministry and sufferings of Christ; and the

doctrine of divine influence as necessary to human renovation, but operating in consistency with human exertions. The great doctrines of faith and repentance he inculcated, as the indispensable conditions of christian acceptance. He dwelt on the divine perfections, the providence of God, his government, and paternal character, as leading doctrines of christianity. He presented the threatenings of his violated law in a manner adapted to alarm the indifferent, and allured the faithful to higher degrees of perfection, by the peaceful promises of his future favour.

These views he was accustomed to urge by considerations peculiar to the gospel. With the deepest views of human freedom and accountableness, he connected the conviction of man's moral dependence, and was accustomed to consider the sentiment as of essential importance to christian humility and the cultivation of christian virtue. "It is with great delight," he writes, "that I contemplate what I call the moral providence of God, or that influence he exerts over moral beings to aid and guide them in the way of life. This, whether called grace, or the holy spirit, or divine influence, is a motive of great consideration, and I think should be often presented to encourage to holiness."

His pulpit performances were characterized by purity, perspicuity, and directness of style, which, in the free expression of the sentiments of his heart, often rose to strains of the most pathetic and touching eloquence. He was conscientious in adapting his discourses to the common understanding of all in his numerous congregation; and this led him to the rejec-

tion of many of the richer modes of speech, in which his thoughts voluntarily clothed themselves, which was more than balanced by the simple directness and energy, with which he inculcated the truths of religion. For the more public occasions, in which he was often called to officiate, he wrote with elaborate care and diligent study. His ordinary habit of preparation was a rapid expression of thoughts, which he had previously matured and arranged. His habits of mental discipline prepared him for every occasion, and he sometimes most excelled on those, for which he had made the least special preparation. He possessed in an uncommon degree the talent of extemporaneous speaking. His extraordinary self-possession and command of language on such occasions, imparted to his efforts in this respect the method and elegance of the most finished productions. His general style of preaching was much modified by the natural ease and directness, which this habit produced. In the pulpit, his appearance was solemn, collected and grave, as one who felt the weight of the message he brought, and mainly anxious that they who heard should yield to kindred feelings. His voice was musical and clear; his enunciation distinct; his elocution varied and emphatic, adapted in ease or loftiness of manner to the subject; and his action graceful and eloquent.

> "By him the violated law spoke out
> "It's thunders and by him in strains as sweet
> "As angels use, the gospel whispered peace."

He had a strong impression of the value of sacred music as a part of the public acts of worship, and, in his own society, took an active interest in this part

of the service. He was eminently happy in devotional performances. A rich fund of scriptural language, which was always at his command, gave to his occasional services, in this character, a peculiar appropriateness and impression. His public devotions breathed the sentiments of habitual piety. They were the natural expressions of a devout feeling, accustomed to a hallowed familiarity with the supreme object of devout affection; and I think something of their peculiar richness and fervour may be traced to the assistance, which his love of sacred music lent to the natural aspirations of a heart, early and habitually imbued with the tenderest piety.

Dr. Abbot was an eminent pattern of fidelity and prudence in the pastoral office. This excellence was, in him, the combined effect of principle, taste, and wisdom. He cherished the deepest conviction of its dignity, responsibleness, and influence on the best welfare of men. He loved his profession with that self-denying ardour and benevolent devotedness, which are the surest pledges of success; and a knowledge of the human heart guided him to the best methods of influence in this capacity. The qualifications, which might furnish him for the highest degree of usefulness in the pastoral relation, had been the subject of his early and habitual study; and the sphere, in which his duties had been appointed, afforded extensive opportunities for their exercise. He moved among his people, a bright and eminent pattern of all that is venerable and lovely in the sacred office. He was devoted to the inter-

ests of the young, and reaped the return of their enthusiastic affection. He was a kind and benevolent visiter to the mansions of the poor; and, in connexion with every counsel, which a desire for their moral and spiritual welfare might prompt, he made it a principle in his visits to relieve their temporal wants. The poorer portion of his flock experienced his particular concern and ready charities, in the times of public depression. The mariner embarked not on his voyage without the most affectionate counsels; he was accustomed, once in each year, to make this class of his society the subjects of particular counsel and warning. The frequent instances of calamity, to which the dangers of the sea contributed, called into action his benevolent and most assiduous attentions to the bereaved. He was the kind and affectionate pastor in the chambers of sickness, and the abodes of bereavement. He realized, in this capacity, all that can enter into the conception of a devoted, affectionate, and faithful minister. His courteous and tender attention to the families of his flock was the bond of an affectionate union in a large congregation, from a part of which he differed in points of speculation; though tenderly sympathizing in the spiritual wants, and private joys and sorrows of all. He was the parent of his flock, to whom truth came with a holier power, because it flowed from lips they loved. The frequent occasions of domestic affliction, which occurred in the sphere of his pastoral labours, were a constant call upon his sensibilities, and upon those offices, which his pre-eminent skill in the pastoral

care qualified him to render. A singular felicity of adaptation of public and private counsels to the wants and circumstances of his flock was the distinguishing trait of his pastoral character. It is this circumstance, which has rendered the task of selection from his sermons peculiarly difficult and delicate; and many of those, which have most impressed my mind, are, for this reason, withheld from publication. A deeper love has seldom been the present reward of faithful and well directed services in the ministerial relation.

In social life, Dr. Abbot possessed a power of interesting all by whom he was known. His conversation was eloquent, his ordinary manner engaging, and his interest warm in all that was connected with the welfare of others. The gravity of his professional character produced no restraint on the cheerfulness of social intercourse. He blended christian dignity with unaffected gentleness, suavity, and condescension. He recommended religion by his social accomplishments. He won the warm affections of all by the undisguised expressions of a generous nature, and the gentle charities of a warm and benevolent heart. In the sacred retirement of private life, he was a pattern of all that is sweet, engaging, and lovely. His affections shed their purest lustre, and their warmest radiance around the objects of their nearest influence. In personal feelings, he was naturally favoured with a disposition to cheerful views of life. And his religious convictions increased this characteristic of his natural temper. His eminent piety was unmingled

with gloom. His views of providence shed a cheerful serenity over his mind. He laboured to act agreeably to the best views he could acquire of God's will, and was ready to yield to his ultimately merciful appointments, with an entire resignation. In his whole character, piety shone with its proper radiance, and manifested itself in the fruits of active benevolence, and enabled him to reach a degree of personal purity, which to those who knew him best rendered him the object of a fondness and christian affection, which could find under bereavment no mitigation of its pain, but in the conviction of its continuance to shine in brighter regions of love, and the prospect of a future intercourse with that, which was itself adapted to enkindle an inextinguishable affection.

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The following is an extract of a letter from the Hon. L. SALTONSTALL, of Salem, of which, though not originally intended for publication, the author of the foregoing Memoir has been kindly permitted to avail himself, in additional illustration of that part of Dr. Abbot's life, which was spent in his ministry at Haverhill.

I have a glowing recollection of his ministry at Haverhill, in all the freshness of his youth, and his rising fame. There never was a minister more beloved, more admired by his people, than he was, without the slightest interruption, until he determined to leave them. The ardor and unanimity, with which they invited him to settle, was never abated. They printed several of

his sermons, and requested copies of others. The whole Town did justice to his talents. He was appointed to deliver the eulogy on Washington, which was very excellent, and printed by vote of the Town, and "one copy at least," directed to be furnished to each family. * * * * *

When Dr. Abbot was at Haverhill, ministerial exchanges were not confined to those of precisely similar views, but all belonging to the association recognized each other as brethren, entitled to ministerial intercourse and courtesy. Mr. A was more than acceptable in the neighboring Towns. It was thought a great object to procure his services. Nor was this confined to the neighborhood. I believe him to have been, at all times, one of the most popular preachers in the Commonwealth. I remember passing a Sabbath in Portland, in 1804. He was there. In the morning he preached for Dr. Dean, and the house was crowded; and so was Mr. Kellog's where he preached in the afternoon. I recollect the feeling of deep regret, with which I then thought of his being no longer the minister of my own native Town.

While at Haverhill, Dr. Abbot frequently met the youth of his parish, and instructed them in the scriptures, and I have often heard some of his pupils since say, that they were indebted to his interesting mode of conversing with, and instructing them, for much of their knowledge of the Bible, and of the interest in religious inquiries, they have ever since retained. His manner was very peculiar and easy, cheerful, familiar,

gentle, winning their confidence at once, and yet not losing for a moment, the dignity that belonged to his sacred office.

He took a deep interest in the schools and in whatever could improve the state of society in the Town. He was very active in the formation of a social library of well selected books, and induced the gentlemen of intelligence and education, to form a society for literary conversation and exercises; and all this was before Sunday schools, Bible classes, debating societies, &c. were known among us. The effects produced were most happy. Several young people, of both sexes, became communicants in his church—a circumstance entirely unusual in the vicinity—and this, without any extravagant excitement, or effervescence of zeal.

His leaving a flock so united, happy, and prosperous, produced the effect, which might have been expected. No one, who was present, can ever forget the interesting scene, when he first announced the insufficiency of his salary, and that he had even contemplated a separation from them. The whole assembly was deeply affected. They were sorely disappointed; their feelings were wounded; the strongest and tenderest ties were severed. The feelings of many became alienated, and hard thoughts and hard speeches were the consequence. But when time permitted sober reflection to take place, they did justice to his character and motives, and although they have never ceased to regret their loss most deeply, they have long regarded his reputation with great interest and warmth. By

some of the most respectable parishioners he was justified from the beginning, and their attachment to him remained unabated.

I have always considered Mr. Abbot's removal from Haverhill, as a great misfortune to that place and the vicinity; and have written this hasty sketch of his happy ministry there, supposing it might afford some gratification to yourself, so nearly connected with him, and to his family, by whom he was so tenderly beloved.

I am, with great esteem, &c.

Your ob't serv't,

LEVERETT SALTONSTALL.

## PUBLICATIONS OF DR. ABBOT.

*Memorial of Divine benefits:* a Sermon preached at Exeter, on the15th, and at Haverhill on the 29th of November, 1798, days of public Thanksgiving in New-Hampshire and Massachusetts.

*Traits of resemblance in the people of the United States of America to ancient Israel:* a sermon at Haverhill, Nov. 28, 1799, on the anniversary Thanksgiving.

Eulogy on the Life and Character of Washington, delivered by request, before the inhabitants of the town of Haverhill, on his birth-day, 1800.

*The duty of Youth;* a Sermon occasioned by the death of Miss SARAH AYER, April 7th, 1802, at Haverhill.

*The Mariner's Manual;* a Sermon preached in Beverly, March 4, 1804.

A Discourse before the Portsmouth Female Asylum,—Aug. 9, 1807.

A discourse delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1809, at the celebration of the 188th Anniversary of the landing of our Forefathers.

Sermons to Mariners, (a duodecimo volume,) 1812.

An Address before the Massachusetts Society for suppressing Intemperance, June 2, 1815.

Discourse before the Missionary Society of Salem and Vicinity, and the Essex South Musical Society, October 2, 1816.

Discourses on Baptism.

The Parents' Assistant, and Sunday School Book, 1822.

Charge at the Ordination of Rev. BERNARD WHITMAN; February 15, 1826.

Address before the Berry Street Conference, May 31, 1826.

*Ecclesiastical peace recommended;* a Discourse before the annual convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts, May 13, 1827.

*The example of the first preachers of the Gospel considered*; a Sermon at the Installation of Rev. Abiel Abbot in the Congregational Church in Peterborough, N. H. June 27, 1827.

Letters written in the Interior of Cuba, between the mountains of Arcana, to the East, and of Cusco to the West, in the months of February, March, April, and May, 1828—Boston, 1829.

# SERMON I.

## THE GRACE OF GOD BRINGING SALVATION.

TITUS II. 11—xiv.

For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

It was on this comprehensive passage, that one of the greatest of men,* who had accurately surveyed almost every department of science and literature, held in the highest estimation among men, and whose name was venerated throughout Europe, amidst all the learning, and all the wisdom he had collected from ancient and modern languages, is said to have reposed with the greatest satisfaction, and to have found in it, the only effectual solace of a dying hour. There are

*Mr. Selden.

few things of substantial importance in the christian dispensation, which may not be said to be included in it. It declares—

I. *The wonderful grace of God in the Gospel, and the universality of it*;

II. *The excellent purpose for which it is given*;

III. *The coming of Christ to judgment*;

IV. *The end for which he died*; *and*,

V. *The character of his peculiar people.*

I shall attempt a brief discussion of these five particulars:—

1. *This weighty passage declares the wonderful grace of God in the Gospel, and the universality of it.* "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." We perceive, that the grace of God is the original cause of salvation; there was none to move him to his purpose of mercy; he was self moved. He so loved the world, as to provide for its salvation. The motive, the scheme, the whole was of God; the party offended was the first to seek reconciliation. How benign and paternal appears his character. Has it not been without due respect to the text, and similar passages, which are innumerable, that God has been represented as wrathful and vengeful towards sinners, till pacified by the more merciful son? It is quite observable, that in all the passages of scripture, where reconciliation is mentioned, the reconciling of men to God is uniformly intended, and not of God to men. Men are the estranged, and alienated party; God is kindly disposed, desires not the death of sin-

ners ; but their salvation and happiness.—" You," saith the apostle, " that were sometime alienated, and enemies by wicked works, now hath he reconciled ;" and again—" all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses ; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you, by us ; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Such is the affecting language of the New Testament. It is God, who desires our reconciliation to himself. He has sent his own Son to accomplish this blessed end ; and he again employs ministers as his ambassadors, and all to reconcile us to God. We find, among men, that the offending party is the most difficult to be reconciled, and that it is usually harder for the injurious to accept of forgiveness, than for the injured to grant it. And is it not so with our gracious and offended Heavenly Father? Such is " the grace of God which bringeth salvation."

This grace hath appeared unto all men.—The Greek verb here used signifies, to shine forth as the sun. The grace of God in the gospel, " hath shone forth like the sun, and giveth light to all." Hence Christ, the author of the gospel, is called " the day spring from on high," " the sun of righteousness," " the light of the world." The blessings of the gospel were not intended for one nation alone, as the Jews hoped, nor for a

few selected and favored persons, of different nations, while others were passed by. No, this grace of God hath shone forth unto all men, as universal as the beams of the natural sun, as impartial as the rain of heaven, as free as the blessing of water, "for *whosoever will* may take the water of life freely." I come now to observe,

2. *For what excellent purpose this grace was given.*

There are many, who are much inclined to put a period at the end of the first verse of the text, where the apostle intended only a comma. They would consider the sense complete in that verse; but the apostle considers what follows as necessary to complete the meaning. They conclude, that, because the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath shined forth unto all men, all men *must be saved.* This is pleasing doctrine to men, determined to continue in sin. But it is doctrine, supported only by fragments of scripture wrested from their connexion. We learn, by the following words of the apostle, that the excellent design of the grace of God is to form the sinner into a holy character, as previously necessary to his enjoyment of salvation. "For the grace of God teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."—What God hath joined together, never let man put asunder.—It is the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to men, yet it is by means of subduing their corruptions, and making them holy; it is by rescuing them

*from* their sins, not saving them *in* them. And the apostle does not speak in general terms; he mentions particularly that *ungodliness* must be denied or renounced. By "ungodliness," we may understand the denial of the existence of God, or of his perfections, or of his government of the world, or of his righteous retribution in the world to come. This degree of ungodliness savours of atheism, and is impiety of the highest order. But there is *ungodliness* also in *neglecting to worship God;* in disregarding the manifestation of his will in divine revelation; in profaning his name, and in speaking irreverently of his providence. These all are sins peculiarly against God, having direct respect to his person. They must be wholly renounced, before there can be the least hope of the salvation, which the grace of God bringeth.

*Wordly lusts*, also, must be denied. Under these terms are comprehended intemperance, anger, malice, revenge, which are so shockingly common in the world. They imply, also, the immoderate love of those three great idols of the world, *riches*, *power*, and *fame*, to which such multitudes are daily bowing down, in a manner, which makes it very manifest, that there is nothing which they regard in an equal degree. These, too, must be renounced, as productive of misery, and tending to ruin, and as inconsistent with the enjoyment of that salvation, which the grace of God bringeth.

The apostle proceeds to mention, more particularly, that this grace of God teaches us *to live soberly*. By

*sobriety*, we understand the habit of self-government; the uniform restraint of the appetites, within such limits as reason and the Gospel prescribe; as also the passions and affections, carefully avoiding all sinful irregularities and excess. The grace of God also teaches —*to live righteously*. By *righteousness*, we understand the habit of conducting equitably in all our relations to men; that we abstain from injuries to them, in their persons, reputation, and fortunes; that we fulfil the various duties we owe to them, in all our relations and stations in society; sacredly performing our covenants and promises, in secular and spiritual concerns, and doing, in one word, unto all men, whatsoever we could reasonably desire, in exchange of circumstances, that they should do unto us. The Hebrews considered *charity* a branch of righteousness;—for saith the psalmist, "He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever."

There is a third branch of christian duty, which the apostle proceeds to mention, as taught by the grace of God, which bringeth salvation.—We must live soberly, righteously, and *godly* in the present world. *Godliness*, or piety, is the duty, which we owe to God; and "consists in that high veneration, and those just conceptions, which we should entertain of the Supreme Being, and these expressed by prayer and thanksgiving; by loving and fearing him; by putting our trust in him, and submitting ourselves to his blessed will, in all events." Now when we seriously consider the doctrine which the grace of God teaches; the excellency

of that character, which it is intended to form, subduing the corruptions of the human heart, reforming the vices and errors of human conduct, and teaching to fulfil the duties of those three grand relations, in which we stand, to ourselves, to our fellow men, and to God; how precious, and worthy of all gratitude and praise, is that grace in this single point of view! It tends to render us healthful in body, and at ease in mind, a blessing to our fellow-men, at peace with God, and exalted into a holy communion and friendship with him. If there be a happy man on earth, it is he who is the subject of that grace; who submits himself to this divine teaching; who renounces ungodliness and wordly lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." But the comforts, which immediately flow from sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, are but the beginning of the salvation, mentioned in the text; comforts often interrupted by the afflictions of life, often by a bad frame, and the great imperfection of the graces even of the best. It is a further circumstance of deep interest in this passage, therefore, that it declares the *coming of Christ to judgment;* the

3d Thing to be considered—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The literal translation of the Greek, in the latter clause, is, not the glorious appearing of the great God, but the *appearing of the glory of the great God, and of*

*our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, will appear at the last day, clothed in his own glory, attended by his Father's glory, as well as accompanied with all the holy angels, as we learn from several distinct passages of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and the object of that appearance is, to judge the world and to render rewards and punishments, as the characters of men shall be found to be, and particularly to give eternal life to them, "who have denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lived soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." The assured expectation of eternal life to be so conferred, on the glorious morning of the last day, is a source of unspeakable consolation to those who thus live, renouncing their corruptions, and fulfilling their duties. Whatever troubles they are called to bear, it reconciles them to bear them patiently, by reflecting, that "they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." And if they find the conflict with their passions and appetites to be often severe, and even, as the apostle calls it, a "being crucified unto the world," they animate their courage and fortitude, to go resolutely through the whole, by looking forward to the blessed hope of eternal life, at the appearing of Christ to judgment. The motto and watch-word of the christian soldier is—"no cross, no crown." We are now,—

4th To consider another subject, the death of Christ, as intimately connected with human salvation, and inquire the particular *end for which he died.*

"Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity." O divine charity! he *gave himself* for us! We think highly of men, who give a little of their superfluous wealth to build a hospital for the infirm or insane;—and it warms our hearts to see smaller kindnesses rendered; a night's watching with the sick, and even bread only to the hungry, or a cup of cold water to the thirsty, in the name of a disciple; rejoicing to believe that he, who gives it, shall not lose his reward. But our blessed Lord gave *himself*—to toil and suffering, to sorrow and death, for us "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." We think with admiration of the kindness shown by the exalted to the low and miserable, by the prince to the beggar, by the enlightened to the ignorant, by the innocent to the debased and guilty. What terms, then, can express a proper sense of the love of Christ to men? What a condescension in the Son of God, to leave the glory he had with the Father before the world began; to assume the form of a servant; to be the subject of continual sorrow; to engage with wasting zeal in the work of enlightening and saving the world, and closing his other sufferings with the agonies of the cross, that he might redeem us to God. "Surely," in the words of the apostle, "the love of Christ passeth knowledge."

This love appears still more gloriously, when we consider the *nature* of the redemption he came to accom-

plish. He gave himself that he might *redeem us from all iniquity*. The excellency of the end enhances the gift. It was not merely to redeem us from the *punishment* of our sins, but from their *reigning power*, and from polluted and debased, to transform us into holy beings, to refine us into angelic excellence, and to exalt us into angelic felicity and glory. It is a charity of a very exalted kind, when a man, from tender pity of human wretchedness, will venture into the most infectious haunts of vice and misery, and with persuasive eloquence and patient effort will labour at the risk of health and life, to reclaim the abandoned criminals. But the whole business of our blessed Redeemer was, to redeem a *world* from *all* iniquity. To this object he devoted himself, and to the chief of sinners he extended his divine charity; and by his attentions to them, brought upon himself the reproach, that he was the companion of publicans and sinners. To which he mildly replied, that he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. A few words let me say,

5thly. Of *the character of his peculiar people*—"and purify unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is probably said in allusion to two passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy, where God calls the Jews a peculiar treasure, and a special people to himself, because he had made them his property, by redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt, and

had distinguished them from the rest of mankind, as his, by rites and ordinances of his own appointment. So Christ hath made believers his peculiar people, by giving himself for them, to *redeem* them from all iniquity, and to purify them unto himself, a people, zealous, not of rites and ceremonies, but of good works. We ought to observe, particularly, with what strength and emphasis the apostle speaks, throughout the verses of the text, of the absolute necessity of good works, of a life of holiness and of purity. And when our Lord, and his apostles have laid such stress upon good works, and have frequently declared them indispensable as a condition of salvation, none, who profess christianity, can neglect the practice of them, without the extreme peril of their souls. This being the great end of Christ's life and death, none who profess to be preachers of the gospel can speak of good works with contempt or indifference, without bringing a grievous offence upon the faith of Christ. Woe will be to them, by whom such offence cometh. No. True christians, as Peter also characterizes them, are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light."

After even this brief and imperfect discussion, I hope we see enough in our text to justify the eminent individual, to whom I have alluded, in resting his soul

upon it; enough to awaken our minds to hope and duty. In reviewing and improving the subject, let me say,

1st. We should dwell in our thoughts often, and long, and with grateful wonder, on the "grace of God which bringeth salvation," and "hath shone forth unto all men." How willing, how desirous is he to reconcile sinners to himself—"As I live," saith the Lord, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that he return and live."—"Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die," is his pathetic expostulation by the prophet. He observes by the prophet Jeremy to the Jews, and through them to all men, "I sent unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them." And in the New Testament, behold him sending his only Son to seek and save the lost, and the train of the apostles and evangelists; all beseeching us to be reconciled to God. Let our hearts be melted by all this grace; let not one resist all this superabundant mercy. Indeed, "how should we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us, by them that heard him."

There being such earnestness on the part of God for our salvation; and the Saviour having done and suffered so much for this great end, some seem easy and confident, that salvation for all men and all characters is made certain, without any active concurrence on their part. But be it remembered,

2d. That the very grace of God requires, in order to salvation, a renovation of heart, and purity of life. It teaches, that ungodliness must be denied, worldly lusts renounced and forsaken, that men must live in sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, and be redeemed from all iniquity, purified a peculiar people to Christ, zealous of good works. It is in vain, then, for any of us to take encouragement from the grace of God, great, wonderful as it is, except, at the same time, we yield ourselves to the condition, on which it brings salvation. We must be divorced from sin, or renounce the hope of salvation. In the gospel plan, and in the nature of things, sin and salvation cannot go together. Let us, then, abandon false hopes, and judge truly, that no step is taken toward salvation, any farther than it is taken in renouncing sin. Judge, then, my dear hearers, judge of your hope and prospect of the great salvation, precisely according to the degree in which you die unto sin and live unto righteousness, are dead to the world, and alive unto God.

3d. Let us be drawn to the great work of renouncing all sin, by the most affecting fact, that Jesus "has given himself for us," that he might redeem, or deliver us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people. Shall the blessed Son of God do so much for this end, and we be contented to do nothing? Shall he leave glory, and live, and preach, and die, to deliver us from sin, and we refuse to give it up? Shall he, at the expense of blood, open to us

the gates of heaven, and we refuse to give up our lusts that we may enter in? God forbid. Let the love of Christ constrain us; let the affecting views we have taken of the grace of God, and the love of Christ, bow our souls to their most holy and blessed will. Let us desire nothing so much as deliverance from the power and pollution of sin; such deliverance on earth, is salvation begun, and is a comfortable foretaste and assurance of salvation, complete in glory.

# SERMON II.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHOUT OBSERVATION.

LUKE 17. XX, XXI.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The kingdom of God, and kingdom of Heaven, are terms which often occur in the New Testament; the ultimate and highest meaning of which is, that state of purity and glory, to which the righteous are to be received after death. But their most common and current meaning in the Evangelists is the visible state of the church under the gospel, which prepares for the kingdom of glory. Now the Pharisees, who demanded of Christ *when the kingdom of God should come*, entertained very gross views of its nature. They expected a Messiah clad in blood-stained armour, surrounded by invincible armies, rapidly extending his conquests, till the Roman yoke should be broken from

the Jewish neck, and till his empire, identified with that of the Jews, should be extended from "sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." Such was the kingdom they were looking for, and from which they hoped to derive great wealth and honours. Our Lord's reply to them was concise and direct, adapted to confound the babel of their ambitious hopes, and to illustrate the spiritual nature of his kingdom. As the subject has respect to some of the essential features of christianity, and as really concerns us, as it did the Pharisees who propounded the question of our text, let us direct our serious and awakened attention to a series of observations, which may serve to unfold it. I remark—

I. In its original introduction into the world, the kingdom of God, or gospel dispensation, was without those splendid ensigns which attract worldly attention.

It was a state of things we have seen, widely different from the corrupt hopes of the Jews; widely different from the circumstances which commence the erection of an earthly kingdom. Such a kingdom *comes with observation*, and men may say *Lo here! or Lo there!* And *we* have seen the dreadful tragedy acted over and over again in our own day. A kingdom like this the Jews expected, and the Pharisees desired; and their Messiah coming to them without these ensigns, "they saw no beauty in him that they should desire him."

Glance an eye over his earthly course, and you see little to gratify, and much to offend a worldly ambition.

His birth was in a manger, and his reputed parents, though of royal descent, of humble circumstances, and residents in a despised city. He received baptism from one, "who, though the greatest among prophets, was not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes." His select attendants were fishermen, publicans, and men unknown to the great, or despised by them. In life he had not where to lay his head; was persecuted from Judea to Galilee; his life sought in the city where he was brought up; and after a short course of public labors and sufferings, he was betrayed by one disciple and forsaken by all, condemned by Jews and Romans, and executed as a malefactor. This is as he appeared to the eyes of mere worldly men; and they regarded him, as the prophet predicted, "as a root growing out of a dry ground." Yet—

To spiritual apprehension he appeared gloriously. They who are looking for earthly things only, seem to be under a veil, or their eyes to be holden that they cannot perceive things of a spiritual nature. "Eyes have they, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not." This remark applies to events and circumstances in our Saviour's history. The coming of our Saviour was the fulfilment of ancient and well known prophecies, and his mission was confirmed by the most convincing evidence of miracles. But his kingdom was established in the heart. There was so little in all this to arrest the attention of the worldly Pharisees, that they inquired of Christ, when the kingdom of God should come. Yet some of the nations were impressed

by his miracles, and became the subjects of his spiritual kingdom; and to such he gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believed in his name. I remark—

II. The *laws* of this kingdom were published in a mild and unostentatious manner. It was otherwise with the laws of Moses, although they were a divine dispensation. Nothing could exceed the dreadful majesty, with which the moral law was delivered from Sinai. "The mount was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the whole mount quaked greatly. When the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." The gospel was introduced, and its laws announced, in a very different manner. They were addressed, not to the passions, but to the understandings and affections of men, in ordinary situations, in synagogues and the temple, in the house and in the field, from a ship to multitudes on the shore, and from a mountain to thousands reclining on the grass, below the divine speaker. "His doctrine dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, as the small rain on the herbs, and as the showers upon the grass." Sometimes he spake with an infant in his arms, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Again, he took a little child, and set him in the midst of his audience saying, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." He sometimes accompanied his in-

struction, with most affecting action. To teach humility and kindness to his disciples, he first washed their feet, and then said, "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." He engrafted instruction on present scenes and occurrences, adapted it to the company, and improved common occasions to spiritual purposes. Such was the gentle and persuasive manner in which the laws of his kingdom were made known. It was not by the sound of trumpet, nor the dispensation of angels, that he delivered his laws. Yet "he spake as never man spake;" and manifested wisdom, which all his adversaries could not gainsay. His laws were plain and spiritual, and the authoritative sanctions, with which they were recommended and enforced, were derived almost wholly from the eternal world. He promised riches and honours, and glories, and crowns, and kingdoms to his faithful subjects, but not of this world; they were to be heavenly and eternal. And he threatened the disobedient with "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," not so much in this life, as in that which is to come, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Thus, on account of the mild and persuasive manner, in which the laws of his kingdom were promulged, it *came without observation*, at least to the learned, the proud, the worldly, who looked for something more attractive to their passions.

But our blessed Lord remarks, that *the kingdom of God is within you.* This expression more distinctly declares the *spiritual* nature of this kingdom. And here I remark—

III. That the kingdom of God is in a good degree without observation. Not that it produces no effect upon the heart, nor that those effects are unimportant in their nature; but that they make little show in the eyes of the world, in fact are often overlooked or even despised.

But what are the effects of this empire, when established in the heart? They correspond to the laws of the gospel. If you could inspect a heart thus governed, you would perceive its predominant principle to be *love to God;* and this breathed forth in continual aspirations of praise and thanksgiving, in constant efforts of obedience and submission to the most difficult commands and the most painful services. You would perceive the genuine spirit of self-denial, unaffected humility, unruffled meekness, unbounded charity, a faith steadily surveying and realizing things future and eternal, and hope anchoring upon them within the vail. These things, if you could inspect the heart, I say, you would perceive where the kingdom of God is established within it. But it is the very nature of these holy exercises to shun observation; the screen of humility is dropped over them, that they may appear "not unto men, but unto God." They will be manifest indeed to men of kindred spirit, but the proud, the sensual, the worldly will scarcely regard them. Thus the kingdom

of God within you is, to such men as the Pharisees, without observation.

IV. There is a fourth respect in which the kingdom of God is without observation. As the graces above-mentioned are secret and spiritual, so that blessed spirit which produces them is unobserved in its operation. The scriptures abundantly assure us of the necessity of its energy in the production of the moral graces, flowing from its influence; but at the same time they speak of it as discoverable by its effects alone. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one who is born of the spirit." The subject of its influence is unable accurately to discriminate between the operation of his own faculties and the aid he receives. He may often be surprized to perceive a greater clearness of views, and a stronger impulse to duty, and a more powerful restraint from evil than he is wont to feel; yet still it is only in the result that he perceives the value of that influence. Often the passions may be awakened in a very unusual degree, and their direction and aspect have regard to religious things, and yet all the excitement arise from inferior causes, and subside with them. The terrors of an earthquake, the novel scenes and sympathies of a camp meeting, or the passionate address of the humblest individual, without sense or reason, are often sufficient to put the soul in violent agitation; and this is often considered the work of the spirit, and perhaps rejoiced in as conversion. But the work of the spirit is,

at least most usually, of a milder character and less ostentatious appearance; beginning in awakenings of conscience, in a greater illumination of the understanding, in imparting strength to principles in the heart, and warmth and a true direction to its affections, and in gentle excitation of the passions. These thoughts seem confirmed by that emblematical appearance of the Lord to Elijah on mount Horeb. As he stood upon the mount before the Lord, behold, he "passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire *a still small voice*." And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle; he believed God to be in the still small voice. The effects of the spirit's operation are of a gentle nature —"The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace; and the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. I remark once more—

V. The *blessings and comforts* of the kingdom of God are, in a great measure, without observation.

This certainly is true in the highest respect in which we can speak of them, because its chief and everlasting blessings are to be seen and enjoyed in the world to come. Of those blessings the subjects of this kingdom have a high degree of enjoyment in this life, in the steady faith with which they regard them, and the earnest hope with which they apprehend them. It was

this view of faith and assurance of hope, which inspired the apostles with consolation and joy in the midst of losses and sufferings as great and trying as human malice could invent. In the midst of them they could say, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"—They acknowledged that if it were not for their *hope*, they should be the most miserable of men. But they counted that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed. Now this rich festival, this holy banquet, at which the christian partakes daily through his lively hope, is all withdrawn from the observation of such as the Pharisees were, from the proud, the sensual, the worldly, the covetous. But, like their Lord, "they have meat to eat which the world knows not off." Around their camp the manna falls, and "they live on angel's food." But it is time to improve the subject.

However thoughtless thousands are about it, we perceive that the kingdom of God is come, that it is near us, and among us, and let me say,—

1. First of all, that we are under infinite obligations to enter into it, and to become its willing and obedient subjects.

It is not left to our option whether we will submit to the *human* government under which we were born; we must "submit for wrath, if we do not for conscience sake." Yet human government partakes of imperfection, and in many of its forms and under many of its administrations imposes unjust burthens and inflicts unmerited evils. This is not the case with the spiritual

kingdom of which we are speaking. The highest good of the subject is consulted in every measure. The laws are all just and equal, and directly tend to secure peace, comfort, and joy to the obedient. The laws of this kingdom are, in fact, so many wise counsels and prescriptions in obtaining the highest perfection and felicity of our nature. The laws of this kingdom point out the only remedy for sin, and its present and future evils. By a sincere repentance, a hearty return to obedience, and a firm, which works by love, we are assured there may be deliverance from guilt and woe, and danger. This kingdom is in fact, every way perfect. The blessed and Almighty Ruler is not only righteous, but merciful; not only rewards the faithful, but forgives and blesses the penitent. Do we then refuse to be subjects of this kingdom, and say, "We will not have this man to rule over us?" If so, what must be our condition, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

2. As it is thus important to neglect no duty in this high respect, we are deeply concerned to enter into this kingdom without delay. It is always right now to: its laws are known and familiar: and the blessed Spirit, which is freely given to them that ask, is ready to help our infirmities. But delay is big with danger. The difficulty of subjection will be enhanced by habits of sin, and the hope of divine influence will grow fainter and fainter. If we continue resisting or grieving the

spirit. O let it of a truth be said of us that "the kingdom of God *is within us*:" that "every thought of our heart is subjected to the law of Christ." When this shall be the case, heaven will be let down into our souls: and a measure of its peace and joy will be imparted to us: enough at least to be a most precious foretaste of "joy which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart in man fully conceived."

3. From our subject, we learn that true religion is, in its nature, *still and unostentatious*.

It is not anxious to draw upon it the eyes of the world—is not apt to say with Jehu, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." Its religion is reverence, in the private duties of religion, in secret communion with God, in unseen struggles with remaining corruptions of the heart, in unobserved labours, and, by men, unheard prayers for divine help to "add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity." It pants with longing solicitude for those humble graces, which the world overlooks or despises, but which it knows are in the sight of God of great price. There is a holy delicacy, a lovely modesty in true religion, which constitutes its highest charm.—Yet let me not be misapprehended as intimating, that it shrinks from observation as unwilling to be seen in proper occasions, or unwilling to be scrutinized to the uttermost and brought to the most fiery trial. Many of the duties of religion are public in their very nature: they are social, and must be performed in company: such are the

special ordinances of the gospel, and the duties generally of the sanctuary, and the various duties between man and man. In these respects, to shun observation would be as criminal, as to publicly vaunt the holy secrets of the closet and of the heart. In these respects, as our Lord directs, we are to "let our light shine before men, that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven." And there is one precious spot, midway between the closet and the world, where religion loves to appear; *in the family circle.* Here it should daily manifest itself in the unbosomed confidence of parents and children; in parental solicitude to teach, and filial eagerness to learn; and in heart-felt union in offering the morning and the evening prayer.

Finally, let us study carefully the nature of this kingdom, which "the God of heaven hath set up, and which shall never be destroyed." It is ultimately to be established in all nations. But wherever it is established, the true subjects of it are to feel and acknowledge its influence and power on their hearts; the kingdom of God must be within them, purifying their affections, purging out their corruptions, and establishing that permanent peace, which arises from universal and habitual holiness. Let us feel the deepest solicitude that this kingdom may sway our hearts and affections; that our souls may be interested in its present blessings, and may ultimately rise into its more perfect and glorious state in the heavenly world, through infinite mercy and grace in Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever. Amen.

# SERMON III.

## EXCELLENCY OF THE GOSPEL.

MATTHEW XIII, 44.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Most of this chapter our blessed Lord devoted to instruction by parables, assigning his reasons for adopting that mode of preaching. In each of his parables there is a leading point, which he designs to establish, which we must carefully observe, that we may not by the circumstances of the allegory be misled into singular and erroneous notions. In the brief parable, selected for consideration at this time, the object of our Lord was to declare the inestimable riches of the kingdom of heaven, or the gospel dispensation, and the infinite importance of securing an interest in its present and everlasting blessings. Without farther exposition of what is sufficiently obvious from the text, I shall make it my ob-

ject, by several considerations, to show the divine excellency of the gospel, and the infinite reason we have for embracing it as our only guide to everlasting life, and our best comforter on the way to it.

For a moment, then, let us

I. Glance at the evidence of its divine original. By the gospel we understand the history and doctrines of Christ. What these are, we shall more particularly see under the following head. That they were from God, we have the evidence of *prophecy*. Now, none but God can pierce the vail of futurity and disclose its secrets before the time. Yet ages before the advent of our blessed Saviour, his birth, and life, and miracles, his doctrine, sufferings, and death, and the great end to be obtained by it, his resurrection and ascension to glory, were in no very obscure terms predicted by different prophets. If ancient believers did not fully comprehend what was intended by those prophecies, they sufficiently understood that they pointed to a Saviour, one "who should bruize the serpent's head, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel, a sun of righteousness, who should rise upon the world with healing in his beams." Events, however, have made many predictions clear which were before obscure, and have shown the consistency of facts in our Lord's history, which to the fathers must have seemed incompatible. But I need not quote from the Old Testament, or the New, on this point of evidence; it is clear and convincing to every fair mind, which exam-

ines and compares. Prophecy, then, is the voice of God proclaiming the divine origin of the gospel, and of its author. Besides those prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, and seen to be fulfilled in the history of the New, there are others in the New Testament, announced by our blessed Lord and his apostles, some of which have long since been fulfilled with astonishing exactness, and some are at this moment experiencing their completion, and others seem hastening to a glorious accomplishment. How wonderful is the argument for the truth of the scriptures from prophecy; how adapted to meet the incredulous, to compel their attention, to silence their doubts, and to operate with almost equal force in different ages by means of a succession of prophecies, and a succession of accomplishments.

That the gospel was from God we have, also, the evidence of *miracles*, miracles as well attested as any ordinary events of history. Miracles are such events as evince a special interposition of divine power—"works which no man can do except God be with him." The gospel is a history of miracles. The birth of Christ was miraculous. His ministry was a scene of miracles. Water blushed into wine. The sick were healed with a touch, and with a word. He called forth the dead from the coffin and the grave. The tempest at his rebuke sunk into a calm. The heavens opened over his head, and a divine voice proclaimed—This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Yet while such was his command over all nature, he did not pre-

serve his life from his murderers, but when crucified and buried, he rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven in the view of hundreds who were filled with amazement. In these incontestable miracles, we have again the voice of God, proclaiming the truth of the gospel, and the divine mission of its author. No other religion, but that of the scriptures, pretends to the evidence of miracles. Upon the gospel, and this alone, has God impressed his zeal as true. The miraculous evidence of its divine origin, then, attests the infinite excellency of the gospel.

We proceed to consider this truth in another important point of view, viz :

II. In regard to the doctrines it reveals and illustrates. In a religion, which it has pleased God to introduce with the attendant pomp of prophecies and miracles, we should expect instruction of the utmost importance. Such indeed we find. The gospel reveals the pure and lovely character of God; and right apprehensions of the divine Being are the very foundation of true religion. That the morality of men is influenced by the character of the Gods they worship, is the testimony of every age. If they have gross conceptions of God, their religion will be absurd and superstitious; if they imagine him cruel and implacable, or frivolous and impure, they, his worshippers, will approach his altar, as in regions of Pagan darkness, with human sacrifices, or a servile fear. But the gospel teaches that God is a Spirit, and that he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It presents his charac-

ter in the most amiable and lovely views, adapted to excite men to love him and to imitate his goodness; as having no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but in his repentance and life, and delighting in such titles as these—The Father of mercies—the God of all consolations—the God of love and peace. These intimations of a merciful and gracious disposition are confirmed and illustrated by most wonderful facts. The purpose cherished in the counsels of eternity to save mankind—that highest expression of love, the gift of his dearly beloved Son—the bestowing of his holy spirit to render the gospel effectual to its great end—the rich and precious means of grace, the word, sabbaths, ministry, ordinances, and providences,—these facts proclaim him a God of mercy and compassion, to whom his erring and sinful creatures may with humble confidence return, as to a Father who will joyfully receive them, if penitent. O, how infinitely lovely does he appear in the gospel! Can we behold him thus anxious for our salvation, as if his own happiness depended upon it, and not be overwhelmed with a sense of his goodness? Can we behold him holy, yet disposed to mercy on consistent terms, and not feel impelled to forsake our sins, that he may freely show us mercy?

Next to the character of the Father, we are most deeply concerned to know that of Jesus Christ, his Son. This is completely unfolded in the gospel. It is the grand subject of the New Testament. It displays his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: whom he hath ap-

pointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." It reveals him to sinners, as "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." On this point I only farther remark, that the character, offices, grace and power of Christ are a most affecting illustration of the grace and mercy of God, who hath given him to us. For what he is, he is by the *gift and appointment of the Father.*

But I have not time to enumerate the important doctrines, which the gospel reveals and illustrates, consistently with a due notice of the remaining subjects of this discourse. I only glance at a few points of momentous importance, concerning which, without the gospel, we should be in great darkness; I mean the doctrine of the influence of the holy spirit, by which our minds are enlightened, and our hearts purified, and our strength is increased to resist temptation, and our souls are quickened in a heavenly course; the doctrine of our moral state on earth, as a state of trial, the consequences of which are to be met in the retributions of eternity; the doctrine of a moral change, effected in the soul by the influence of the word and spirit of God, in a manner perfectly consistent with the moral and accountable nature of the subject. But—

III. I proceed to show the divine excellency of the gospel from the moral rules it inculcates.

And here we may remark generally, that the precepts of the gospel are all reasonable in themselves, and tend directly to the highest perfection and happi-

ness of individuals and of society. They command nothing which is unnecessary; they omit nothing which is essential; and they forbid nothing, but that which tends to private injury or public disorder. Read our Lord's discourses, and you find him inculcating humility and meekness, righteousness and mercy, purity and peace, patience under sufferings, and kindness in return for despiteful usage and persecution. Different apostles give substantially the same account of the design of the gospel, as the guide of life, as Paul. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" who also states it as the grand condition of being a disciple of Christ,—Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. James beautifully describes the nature of the gospel; "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

The gospel teaches us our duty in regard to our Maker—inculcating an inward reverence and supreme love to him, and the expression of that reverence and love by external worship. It demands a strict self-government; the utmost purity of heart, and speech, and conduct—"that we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and be holy in all manner of conversation." With precepts of this nature the gospels and epistles abound; and they tend to the formation of virtues, which contribute to our immediate convenience and comfort, to elevate and spiritualize our affections, and

to dispose us to the high duties and sacred joys of piety and virtue.

But in no other book can be found such admirable and perfect instruction concerning our duty to our fellow-men. It not only forbids, as other laws do, whatever is contrary to justice and equity, all violence and oppression, all fraud and over-reaching, all perfidy and breach of trust, and infidelity to promises and engagements, enjoining obedience to human laws, and submission to government, on pain of future condemnation: but it goes farther. It lays its deep foundation of social virtue in the heart, in love, *love to our neighbour*—by whom we are to understand every human being in the world, even our bitterest enemies, if we have any. These all we are to love after a particular manner also; are to love them *as ourselves*. We carry the rule in our own bosoms—it is always in mind, and may be always felt, and in a moment applied. We must love all men "not indeed as highly, or in equal degree with ourselves; but as truly and sincerely, and in a degree proper to their several circumstances, and the relation they bear to us, nearer or more remote." While the precepts of the gospel, if obeyed, preserve us from injuring our neighbour, so they prompt us to do all the good in our power—"to do good to all men—to be kind one to another, with brotherly love"—to feel compassion in their want and misery, and to relieve them when it is in our power. We are to mourn and rejoice with one another, and to bear one another's burthens, to be

prompt to forgive and be reconciled, when there is occasion, even to seventy times seven.

Such are the precepts of the gospel. Were there universal obedience to them, heaven would be found on earth. Nations would be strangers to the crimes and calamities of war. Human government would be little more than a name, or would have nothing to do but to bless its subjects; and churches, neighbourhoods, and families would be scenes of uninterrupted love, and kindness, and felicity. I am—

IV. To show the divine excellence of the gospel, on account of the motives it furnishes to faithful obedience.

The heathen writers enforced the precepts of morality by the cool arguments of the fitness of things, utility, and the like; and even the sacred writers of the Old Testament urged to obedience chiefly by the considerations of temporal prosperity and long life, and deterred from sin by the threatened judgments of God in the present state. But in the New Testament the case is reversed. It teaches to disregard temporal considerations, as comparatively unimportant, although godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It appeals with awful directness to eternity, and opens the glorious and tremendous stores of heaven and hell, to impel the tardy disciple of Christ to run the race which is set before him. The governing passions of the human mind, its fears and its hopes, are most forcibly addressed. "To them, who by patient continu-

ance in well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality," it holds forth the prize of eternal life. And on the other hand, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Nothing can be conceived by the mind of man to add anything to the weight of these sanctions by which the gospel is enforced. Yet—

V. Let me remark for a moment the superior excellency of the gospel, on account of the consolations it renders to the afflicted in this present life.

How wretched, short of the gospel, have been all attempts at consolation under the principal troubles of life! Heathen sages did what they could to blunt the sense of them. Some affected *to doubt* whether there was any such thing as sense or pain. Others maintained that afflictions were evils only in *opinion* and *imagination*, and that a wise man ought not to be troubled under them. Others more gravely contended, that troubles come by fate or necessity, and therefore it was foolish to be affected by what could not be avoided. But in all this, there is not a particle of relief or comfort; it seems almost a mockery to suggest these things to a broken heart.

But what is the course which the gospel takes? Has it a balm to pour into the anguished heart? O yes! "These light afflictions are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. Whom the Lord loveth, he chastened. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. They that sow in

tears, shall reap in joy." There is comfort in suggestions like these. Afflictions are welcomed by the Christian, because of the salutary discipline they exercise over him. The influence on the temper and affections, on the life and conduct, on the hopes and prospects of the Christian reconcile him to the pain.—He trusts it is his Father's will, that months of sorrow lead to ages of joy—fleeting days of painful trial to an immortality of joy and glory.

But I must not enlarge.

In showing the supreme excellency of the gospel, I have been led to a series of particulars, each of which was a sufficient subject of an entire discourse. Yet I hope the present discussion of them may lead us to perceive how highly exalted we are in the privilege of a religion, demonstrated to be from God; containing doctrines so purifying and encouraging, and counsels and directions so perfect, for the government of the heart and life; and motives so powerful, pure, and exalted, to incite us to self-denial and duty; and consolations so incomparable with any, which the wisdom of man had been able to devise under the afflictions of life.

And now, in closing the subject, let me ask, has this divine religion all that influence in purifying our hearts and reforming our lives, which God and our own consciences declare to be reasonable to expect? Who is there, who, in regard to himself, can with comfort answer the question? How general a thing does it seem

to be to live, as if the grace of God which bringeth salvation had never appeared to us; as if we had never heard of heaven or hell, or regarded what the scriptures say of them, as tales not intended to be believed; and had no expectation of the "blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness, and who will bestow mighty rewards on those who faithfully serve him, and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us remember, that it is in vain that we are distinguished above others by the christian revelation, except we study it, and have its evidences, doctrines, precepts, motives, and consolations, familiar to our minds. Indeed, let us remember, that it will be utterly in vain that we do study into these things, and that our minds be imbued with this divine and most precious knowledge, except the due influence of that knowledge be felt in the heart also. The heart and its affections must be refined, exalted, and directed to proper objects, and in just degrees. "Blessed are they that *do* the things which are written in this book, that they may have right to the tree of life." Did I say, it will be in vain that we have this gospel, except we study and know it; and in vain that we know it ever so thoroughly, except we are sanctified by it? It will be worse than in vain, a thousand fold. It must save us, or aggravate our condemnation. Its wonderful grace, its

holy precepts, its glorious promises, its tremendous threatenings, if they do not change us into a holy character, if they do not make us partakers of a divine nature, will rise up in judgment against us, and make it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, than for us in the great day.

Merciful Father! Sanctify us through thy truth. Thy word is truth!

# SERMON IV.

## HEARING THE WORD.

LUKE VIII. 18.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

In order to have an exact understanding of this passage, we must advert to the circumstances, in which it was delivered. Our Lord, teaching on the shores of the lake, the multitude became so great and pressing, that he could not address them on the land. He therefore entered into a vessel, and withdrawing to a convenient distance from the shore, spake to them the striking parable of the sower.

It was short, but full of weighty thoughts; and to give the multitude time to reflect upon it, we learn from another evangelist, that he directed them to launch out somewhat farther from the shore. The disciples in the vessel improved the occasion to ask an explanation of the parable. This he gave to them with great plain-

ness; observing to the twelve that "unto them it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven." And in the context he gives the reason, why everything was explained to them; namely, that they as teachers might reveal it to others. "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest, neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad." These words were doubtless delivered to the twelve particularly, or to those in the vessel with him. But the words which follow seem to have been said to the multitude on the shore, as well as to those who were with him, as the instruction was of general concern. "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken that which he seemeth to have."

This passage, you perceive, contains instruction for two classes of men, for the teachers and hearers of the gospel. It is to the latter, on this sabbath which completes another year of our connexion as pastor and people, that I am anxious to suggest in this discourse such considerations, as may excite them to a more faithful and effectual hearing of the gospel.

My simple plan of discourse will be, to consider the solemn charge of our Lord "to take heed how we hear," and the encouragement he gives to the diligent hearer.

As the command "take heed how ye hear," implies everything which belongs to a faithful and effectual hearer, its meaning must be comprehensive. We shall not give too great a latitude to the precept, while we consider it as intended to point out the proper temper and

conduct, which should prepare us for particular seasons of hearing the gospel; those which should accompany our attendance on them; and those which should mark our improvement of them, when those seasons are past.

I. This precept regards the preparation to be made before coming to the house of the Lord. When we consider the consequences of hearing aright, and of hearing amiss, our expected visit in the house of God is not a matter of indifference, or of light concern. Life and death are at stake. If preparation be neglected; if we come without forethought or prayer, it will not be surprising if we hear almost in vain. If we come with a mind so indevout and careless, how easily may we be betrayed into sleep; or into vain thoughts and schemes of a worldly nature, which ought not to be permitted to intrude into the Lord's day, and still less into the sanctuary. O how many are conscious that the thunders of the law have often rolled over their heads, and the trumpet of the gospel has sounded with the tidings of joy to sinners, while they have been insensible to both. If we would not hear with a heart so vain and worldly, so dull and cold, we must enkindle its best affections before we enter the sanctuary. The most effectual discipline is *prayer*. This, if anything, will awaken it to a proper frame. In the closet we should plead with the God of all grace, that he would save us from the guilt of another idle Sabbath, and of a careless attendance on the blessed institutions of his grace. We should plead with him for that preparation of heart which is with the Lord; for the hearing ear and

understanding heart; for that good and honest heart, which shall receive the seed of the divine word, and bring forth fruit abundantly.—And let me add, beloved hearers, that *I* solicit to be remembered in those precious moments of prayer, before going to the house of God. The apostles, inspired as they were, earnestly requested the prayers of those to whom they ministered.—"Brethren," said Paul, "pray for us, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified." This success he seems to rest, in part, upon their prayers. Brethren, pray for *us*, who so much more need the prayers of christians, "that we may come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ"—that we may be the honored and happy instruments of your salvation; and that our zeal and affection, our prayers and discourses, may be such as become the ambassadors of Christ. Such prayers, I doubt not, when sincere, would be answered in immediate blessings upon yourselves.—The word would come to you with power from those ministers whom you had commended to God in your early devotions; and you might hope that a sabbath so begun would prove a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

If you would take heed how ye hear, be also anxious to hear with *constancy*. He cannot be said to take heed how he hears, who seldom hears at all. There are many excuses for neglecting the house of God, which cannot bear a serious review, and will be unsatisfactory on a dying bed. One dislikes the preacher, another the doctrine, and a third has good

books at home. But I would seriously ask, if any one was ever known to be spiritually and practically religious, who rested on excuses like these, and was generally absent from public worship? I appeal to your observation and experience. You will find that those good books are not much read by the person, who makes them his excuse for shunning the house of God. And he who is captious and complaining as a hearer; who makes a minister an offender for a word; who condemns him on a mere breath of rumour; and stops his ears through prejudice, is evidently, of an unteachable disposition, and is not likely to be much benefited by his reading. On the other hand, the constant and sincere attendant on public worship is the one most likely to fill up the intervals of divine service with reading and reflection, comparing books with preaching, and both with the word of God. But it may be farther observed, that the duty of attendance on public worship, and I may add the benefit of it, do not depend on the talents of the preacher. Whether these be excellent or ordinary,—attend on the divine institution of preaching; and for the profit, look not so much to him, as to God, whose blessing you are encouraged to expect in his own institution. Like the psalmist, then, "Love the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honor dwelleth. Wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

The promises in the word of God, encouraging to this duty are as many and as precious as the duty is important. How lively and animating is that passage in

Isaiah—"They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." With so much encouragement, neglect not to frequent the house of the Lord. It is a spot of peculiar delight to the sincere soul. David, when cast by his troubles at a distance from the house of God, and prevented his accustomed visits there, could scarcely think of anything else. He panted after the streams of the sanctuary, as the wounded deer for the cool water of the brooks. "When" says he, "when shall I come and appear before God!" As it is a place of delight to the religious soul, so it is of spiritual *growth*. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

Coming with devout preparation and with constancy then,

2. Listen with awakened attention to the preached gospel. Without such attention, there can be no reasonable hope of spiritual benefit. And yet how many ways have a part of the assembly for passing their time without it. Some lose themselves in sleep; and then how sad an emblem do their slumbering bodies exhibit of the stupor which has come over their souls. They are like the dumb idols which the psalmist describes—"Eyes have they, but they see not: ears have they, but they hear not, neither do they understand." What our blessed Saviour says of the Jews may be applied to voluntary and habitual sleepers, "Their eyes have

they closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Such should remember the story of Eutychus, who sleeping under the preaching of Paul, and falling from an upper window, met with sudden death. Who can say how many, sleeping under the preaching of the gospel, incur a more remediless death than this. It is certain, that they waste those precious moments allowed them to escape the second death, and lose those means, which God most usually blesses to prevent so dreadful an end.

Others are awake, but not to listen with awakened attention—it is to gaze on the scene before them; to criticise the looks, and perhaps judge the hearts of those around them; or their thoughts have fled entirely away from the house of God to places of business, to scenes of pleasure, and perhaps haunts of sin. Others are less grossly inattentive, and yet are careless and ineffectual hearers. Too many listen to a tale that is told, that they may be amused and entertained, or may discover matter of criticism, and find something to praise or blame in the preacher. O how wide is all this from hearing with a view to salvation. Such persons seem not once to think of themselves as concerned in what is said; and till they listen in a very different manner, the closest preaching will do them no good. And never do we hear with that attention, which the gospel demands before we hear as for our lives; before we feel that life and death, in the preached gospel, are

set before us, and that we are summoned to make our choice of one or the other, and must abide by it forever. May God of his infinite mercy grant that we may so hear the gospel, as that it shall be a savour of life unto life to each one of us.

3. I proceed to the third important particular. If you would "take heed how ye hear" *reflect* upon what you have heard. If you should listen with awakened attention, and yet drop the thoughts of the subject from your mind, as soon as you return from the sanctuary, what will it avail you? Your case would be that of the wayside hearer, from whom the hungry birds caught away the good seed, that none took root. Let it be your constant habit to revolve the subject in your thoughts in private. See to what good account it can be turned. Observe in what respects the discourse and your conduct are at variance. How few are the hearers, who, on reflection, might not find in every sermon, reproof and correction, or instruction in righteous ness, or hints to render the man of God more perfect. Some, on self-examination, would feel convicted of habitual, others of partial neglect; and others would see occasion to lament, not perhaps the utter neglect of the duty, but the spiritless, and heartless manner of its performance. In short, in every discourse, there may be found something for every one, if he will reflect, and have the judgment, the conscience, the resolution to receive it. Upon that portion a *reflecting* hearer will fix, and apply it to himself. He will not be satisfied with saying, such and such things were well said, or

might have been better said, or were applicable to another person; but such and such things came home to my case, to my bosom, to my conscience. They clearly pointed out sins which I must forsake, and duties which I must no longer neglect, if I would shun the divine displeasure. Thus to reflect on what we have heard, is to take heed how we hear, and the benefit will soon be made manifest to ourselves and others.

Thus have I considered several things implied in this solemn charge of our blessed Lord, "take heed how ye hear." I proceed to the—

II. Principle head, to consider the encouragement which our Lord gives to the diligent hearer of the gospel. Our Lord, in giving to his disciples the reason why he preached to the Jews in parables, assigned their stupidity and prejudice as the reason, alluding to a passage in Isaiah, which predicted their wilful opposition to the gospel. The force of their prejudice was seen in the most affecting manner, in the time of Christ and his apostles, which miracles and inspired arguments, and more than human eloquence could not remove. It is seen upon their minds unto this day, and yields not to the force of arguments accumulating from the success of the gospel, from prophecies accomplished, especially the predictions of Christ concerning their desolation and dispersion. Some tokens begin to appear in various parts of the world, that the time *of the end* is coming, when they will yield up their prejudices and be converted, and become living stones in the very building they have laboured to destroy.—But the en-

couragement to the diligent, sincere, unprejudiced hearer of the gospel is the same now. "Unto them that hear shall more be given." How true is this of persons once awakened to hear the gospel in earnest. To them everything appears new and awfully interesting. The truths which had been again and again declared, and inculcated utterly in vain, fasten on the conscience with power, and seize upon the mind as momentous realities. The Scriptures appear to them a new book. Chapters which were familiar, develope to them new truths. The threatenings and promises, which they had disregarded as distant or uncertain, now appear near and incontestible. So important, whether we read or hear the gospel, is *awakened attention*. Without it, all privileges go by fruitlessly. It is as if the gospel were preached in parables. Earnest, constant, devout attention it is, which strips off the veil; which grasps the full meaning; which conveys its sanctifying and saving influence to the soul.

As there is encouragement to the diligent hearer in this passage, so there is warning to alarm the careless—"Whosoever hath not, improveth not what he hath, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." This is a proverbial mode of expression in use with heathen writers, as well as in the sacred Scriptures, and the meaning is plain enough, without farther explanation—He that improveth not what he hath, from him shall be taken away that which he neglects to improve. This is alarming to multitudes in a christian land, who have received a re-

ligious education; who from parents, from reading the holy Scriptures, from attendance in the house of God, have obtained a speculative knowledge of most of the essential truths of the gospel. If they are careless to improve their knowledge; if they grow inattentive to the holy scriptures, and neglect to peruse them as they advance in life and mingle in its busy scenes; if they neglect the means of grace; forsake the assemblies for worship and instruction; they are the persons warned in my text. They are in danger of losing what they have of divine truth, and of seeing good impressions, once made, effaced. The world, like devouring birds, will soon snatch away the neglected seed, once dropped into their minds, or will choke it with the thorns of its cares and pleasures. In a word, if persons do not strive to preserve, to improve, to increase their religious knowledge, and to deepen their religious impressions, they will soon be lost as to any valuable effect on their minds and hearts. They will be likely to imbibe impressions which will destroy the influence of the most important truths once believed. They may at length come to deride the truths of religion as tales of the nursery, or the fictions of gloomy minds; and thus escape from well founded and salutary fears, and lay hold of flattering and groundless hopes, and boldly expect happiness without virtue, and salvation without faith or repentance. And then will be taken away even that which they seemed to have.

I am anxious to urge this warning of our blessed Lord upon the young at that critical age, when they

have reached a period somewhat beyond the regular instructions of their parents and ordinary teachers. Till this moment, they may have enjoyed excellent privileges. But on quitting school, or higher seminaries, and entering, in a new sense, into the world, they are in danger of dropping religious study, with other study, and the Bible with other books which have engaged the earlier years of life. If tempted thus to do, my young friends, you are tempted to your ruin, and are in danger of the affecting menace of the text. So far from relaxing attention to religious things, just as you issue from under the wing of your parents, you have reason to redouble your seriousness, and application to them. You have had the aid of your parents in walking; now you must walk unsupported. You have had their counsels to guide and restrain you; now, your own reflections must be your guide and restraint. How diligently, then, should you study the word of God, to enrich your minds with unerring wisdom and to imbue your hearts with saving truths. Your parents led you, when lisping infants, to the throne of grace, and taught you to pray; and will you —can you feel easy, to neglect prayer, after they cease to take your hands in theirs, and assist your petitions? Let it not be—cleave to the Bible, and to the throne of grace; and like Jacob, let not the fleet angel go, until he bless thee. Remember the warning of the text—He that hath not, he that improveth not what he hath, neglects the treasures of truth and coun-

sel, gathered in the favoured seasons of childhood and youth, and gives up the thought of adding to them,—from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

But I must hasten to close the subject, which has employed this day, endeared to my own heart, and I hope also to yours, as the anniversary Sabbath of our union, associated as it is, with a thousand affecting recollections. For twenty-three years, it has been mine to preach the gospel, and yours to hear; with what fidelity on either part, the great day will disclose. I bless God they have been years of undisturbed harmony and friendship. There are few families with whom I have not wept, for nine hundred and fifty-six have in these years gone from us, to the great congregation of the dead. Two hundred and sixty-six have become communicants at the Lord's table; fifty-three have taken upon them the baptismal covenant; and six hundred and sixty-six subjects have received baptism. It is affecting to give this simple recital. I cannot look back upon the past, but with deep emotion. Would to God I might have done more for those who have gone to their great account. Blessed be God, that of many of them I can think with a lively hope that they are in glory. You, my friends, still receive my poor aid, in preparing to die—in preparing to live forever. O let us be serious in this momentous business. We shall soon follow the thousand, who have gone before us. It is a serious thing to die.

Let us preach and hear as for our own lives. Let us not forget the hints of this discourse. The prize to be gained, is heaven and its eternal joys. If we lose the prize, unutterable woe will be your portion. So dreadful an issue of our union, God forbid. "Let us work while the day lasts, the night cometh in which no man can work."

# SERMON V.

## THE LOVE OF GOD.

JUDE, 21st verse.

Keep yourselves in the love of God.

If we consider the rank, which our blessed Lord assigned to the love of God among the commandments; or the exalted happiness which results from this highest of the affections; or the influence it has upon every part of the christian character, it being the very life and spirit of every other affection and duty; or its absolute necessity to any well founded hope of acceptance with God, and of the everlasting happiness of his presence above; the motives, which should influence to the love of God, are certainly as great and affecting as can be addressed to a human mind. Every thing, then, which may in the smallest degree conduce to the beginning or increase of the love of God in the soul, becomes a duty of high importance. Although we are dependent on the powerful influence of the spirit of

God, to begin, and preserve, and increase this most precious affection, I need not say, that we are under the most solemn obligations to contribute our part to these important ends. If we are destitute of this affection, or, if existing, should it languish and die, the blame will lie with us, and the misery of outcasts from his love will be our just portion. Let me then beseech my hearers to lend their most awakened attention, while I suggest some of the best means of keeping themselves in the love of God; the best means of beginning to love God and of increasing in this exalted affection.

Nothing is more certain than that the current of the soul cannot set in two opposite directions at the same time; we cannot love God and at the same time love what he abhors. Now, God in his nature is entirely opposed to all unrighteousness, and is disgusted with all impurity, and abhors the lusts of flesh and spirit. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Let me, then, say—

That the first step towards the love of God, is to withdraw our affection from the things which oppose his attributes and will.

Is it possible that we should love the wages of unrighteousness, and yet love the *justice* of God, an essential attribute of his character, which will assuredly render to every one according to his deeds? Can we feel complacency in the divine purity, which cannot look upon sin but with disgust, and yet ourselves delight in pollution? It cannot be. The sins we indulge

will awaken in us a dreadful apprehension of his displeasure, so often as we think of God. That displeasure, conscience will pronounce just. Yet his laws, which we are constantly violating, we shall be likely to regard as severe and unamiable, if we cannot deny that they are just; and we shall think of the laws given with terror and even aversion. The consciousness of living in a way which is offensive to God, while there is no sorrow for it, and no repentance, must of course close the heart against the love of him. It is so between man and man. How commonly do you see, that when one man has injured another, he adds to the injury the sentiment of hatred. Observe them carefully, and you will perceive the *injured* person sooner inclined to friendly feeling, than the injurious, more ready to forgive than he to be forgiven. It is the same between man and his Maker. Guilt alienates him from the best of Beings. Every cherished lust, every act of sinful indulgence estranges his heart, more and more from God. "He is alienated from him by wicked works." But I may add, if the injurious person, in the case supposed, is at last reclaimed; if he returns penitent to his injured brother, and finds unlooked for candour and a kind embrace; then, his heart will melt into love, and his affection be lasting and ardent. Such is the case with the penitent sinner. Beholding the compassion which God extends to the wanderer, the generous pardon and joyful reception, with which he embraces, adorns and feasts him as a son, he dissolves

into love and astonishment; and, as our Lord beautifully expressed it, "he loves much, because he has been forgiven much."

If then we desire, that the love of God may be begun or increased in our hearts, first of all, let our corrupt affections be eradicated. Cheerfully let us sacrifice "the friendship of the world, which is enmity with God," by which we should understand the corrupt principles and practices which prevail in it, or as the scripture expresses it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." If we make this sacrifice, much is then done, and nothing is done without it, towards the love of God. We love not God, while we yield up the heart to his enemies. Would we love him? Then let us search the heart, and draw forth to the light, and to the cross, every secret traitor there. The heart, purged of idols, becomes the temple of God. "He dwells with him, who is of an humble and contrite heart." The debasing impurities and darkening clouds of sense having passed away, how clear and spiritual will be the vision of the soul; and how bright and lovely will the divine image appear to it. Then those harsh views of the Divine Being, once entertained, will have vanished; and his justice and mercy, his truth and holiness will be seen in perfect consistency. Then how glorious will appear his works, how equal his government, how munificent his providence, how surprising his grace. And views like these will surely awaken the soul to admiration and love. Let me observe—

II. That just apprehensions of the divine character tend greatly to promote the love of God in the soul. Most *human* beings suffer by a near and close scrutiny; the dazzling qualities, seen at a distance, disappear at your approach, or are over-balanced by imperfections and blemishes, which cannot be concealed from the eyes of the examiner. But the reverse is true of God. Although by searching we cannot find him out to perfection, the subject being infinite, yet new and brighter glories are continually diclosed to the contemplative and devout—we may go on forever to know the Lord. His character is a universe, boundless and unsearchable by mortal or immortal eyes, in its full extent, but the more we enlarge the field of vision, and the deeper we look into the glorious abyss, the higher will rise our grateful admiration and love. The scriptures speak of the knowledge of God as implying all good affections, and as being love itself. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And on the other hand, ignorance of God is a summary description of a wicked man. "Now the sons of Eli," saith the scripture, "were men of Belial; they *knew* not the Lord." And St. John affirms, "He that loveth not, doth not *know* God;" evidently implying that the knowledge of God inspires love; at least, that this is the tendency of it. *In the neglect of pious contemplation*, we find the immediate cause of a heart cold to God. How should the divine perfections kindle our souls into love, if the mind dwells not upon them? How should they pro-

duce their proper effect, if we are at no pains to acquire correct and clear apprehensions of them? We may be assured that it will be of the best tendency, if we form the *habit* of contemplating the Divine Being. It is the character of the wicked, that "God is not in all his thoughts." It should then be true of the pious, that God is seldom absent from his thoughts. He should think of him in the silence of the night, and in the hurry of the day; in moments sacred to devotion, or crowded with care. The more we think of him, the more we meditate on his perfections singly, or consider the harmony of the whole, and of the exceeding glory which results from it to the divine character, and happiness to the universe, the more will our hearts warm into admiring, reverential, filial love to the great Father of all.

I must acknowledge, however, that it requires strong effort of the mind and affections, to fix them abstractedly on God, an invisible and infinite spirit, or to contemplate him without reference to the exercise of his perfections. Nor is this necessary; for

III. A most important means both of attaining and increasing the love of God is "to consider his works and ways." These give a sort of visible form and reality to his perfections; and I might almost say, present him to our senses. The feeblest, the dullest mind only needs to be brought to view God in his works and ways, to perceive, to feel, to be impressed. Familiar as they are, is it possible that we should seriously consider the works which God has created; the innumera-

ble shining orbs, with which he has filled the vast expanse, above, beneath us; the order of their arrangement, the harmony of their motions, the exact balancing of the complicated whole, and the infinity of happy beings to which they afford convenient residence and sustenance, and not be filled with admiration and love of their beneficent Creator?

We may correctly judge what God has done in other worlds, by what he has done in this. Our comforts are all his gift; our miseries are all of our own procuring. What a happy face of things should we here behold, had not sin in so great a degree marred it. As the garden of Eden was to its sinless cultivators, so would the whole earth have been to their posterity, if sinless. But in despite of sin and of its effects, what admirable evidences do we still behold on every side of us, of God's munificence and his paternal care? The meanest living thing is not forgotten before him, nor left without a suitable provision for its life and comfort. Every thing needful for the support, the convenience, the relief, the delight of his creatures, is provided. The pious of ancient times used to excite their devout affections by contemplation on these things, till with rapturous joy and gratitude they exclaimed—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches." "Great is the Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite. All thy works praise thee, O Lord." If magnificent vastness, infinite variety, inimitable beauty, and with these, never-failing bounty, can

awaken interest in our minds, and excite our affections, they are ever before us in the works and providence of God. When we survey the skies in the evening, when we look over the garden in the spring, and the fields in autumn, laden with the fruits of the year, and we drink health and sweetness from a thousand springs, O let us consider that the kind hand of God hath formed and furnished them all, that his creatures might be happy; and let the vast and tender thought excite us to holy gratitude, and to unutterable love.

The whole field of God's works and ways is boundless; and we are in danger, from its very infinitude, of losing that deep and due impression, which a nearer contemplation of them would excite. Let us then examine that little portion of it, which comprehends our personal interests. Would we count the mercies of God to us? Says the psalmist, they "are more than the sand." Look upon this little world of wonders, the body, which his skill has formed; consider the more wonderful soul, which he has breathed into it, intelligent, free, immortal. Consider, as you look back, the signal instances of divine goodness, personal to yourselves, which cannot, ought not ever to be forgotten,—dangers intercepted, sicknesses healed. You have been a shipwrecked and despairing mariner, and yet were brought safe to land. You stretched forth your hand to God, as your only hope, and he saved you. You found the words of the psalmist true—"The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, a refuge in times of trouble." But there are mercies greater

than these, shown to the immortal part in its more dreadful dangers. With what patience hath he borne with us in our sins, and delayed his deserved judgments, waiting for our repentance, that he might show us mercy; multiplying the means of our recovery from sin, warning us by his providence, instructing us by his word, persuading us by his ministers, convincing, enlightening, sanctifying us by his spirit, redeeming us by his son, and ministering to us by his angels, that we "may be heirs of salvation." Ought we not to number over these personal mercies of God to us thoughtfully, till our hearts are full of grateful emotion, till they rise into the highest and purest degree of love, of which they are capable? Are there not some present, who trust they have not received all this grace of God in vain; who hope that it has been made effectual to them? Such surely will not cease to think of the ways in which God has prepared for them his mercy; now alarming them by his terrors, or softening them by affliction, persuading them by the earnest voice of mercy in his word, and constraining them by the influence of his spirit. Mercies of this description cannot, will not fail to bring the subjects of them to high degrees of holy love. And let me remark—

If, as we have seen, the consideration of the works and providence of God in general is an efficient means of promoting love to him; so, above all other things, is the consideration of his gracious plan for the redemption of our race from sin and misery. It is in this, that his perfections shine forth with the brightest, the most

cheerful and penetrating beams. Here, in the lively figures of the psalmist, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven." "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he first loved us, and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins." If we truly desire to love God, let us view him through the medium of the gospel; through the ministry and sufferings of his beloved Son, most freely offering mercy to sinners, and constraining us to accept it, and with it everlasting blessedness and glory. If we can consider God presenting himself to us in this attitude, and fail to love him, then how chilled and dead are our affections; how cold, how hard our hearts, if this does not melt them!

To all other means of promoting the love of God in the soul, we must add—

IV. Earnest and constant prayer. For we must remember that the love of God is an affection, to the production of which, his favour is necessary, although that favour is commonly dispensed in our behalf, in the diligent improvement of those means which I have been suggesting, and others of a similar efficacy to enkindle the affections. And, I add, it is the *direct* tendency of the duty of prayer, to promote the love of God in the heart. Prayer is converse with God. The soul, in that act, draws near to him, and discovers his glory and loveliness, and the light of his countenance is often lifted upon the kneeling suppliant.

Frequent converse and communion with a friend, is the life of human friendship. It is so also—with reverence would I say it—between God and the soul. Love to him will be in proportion to communion with him in prayer and pious meditation; as I believe many happy souls can testify. And none can long neglect prayer, or run over the duty in a formal and careless manner, who will not find their hearts cold and distant from God.

Thus I have suggested some of the best means of "keeping ourselves in the love of God." I briefly recapitulate them, and close with a word of exhortation. We must withdraw our affections from the things which oppose his attributes and will. We must strive to obtain just apprehensions of the divine character. We must consider his works and ways, especially that little portion of them, which comprehends our personal mercies; and to these means, and each of them, we must add our fervent and constant prayer for the divine favour, without which our exertions will be ineffectual.

These are scriptural and highly important suggestions. Let us apply ourselves to the use of these means with holy zeal, and with the deepest solicitude, to attain and increase the love of God in our souls. It is God's good pleasure to help the active, and to consign the slugglish to the dreadful fruits of their own neglect.

Beloved hearers, consider, I beseech you, the infinite and eternal importance of the love of God.

You rejoice when you find a good and sincere friend, in a mortal as frail as yourselves. If you have found a wise, faithful, and unalienable friend, you exclaim with the sententious Young—

A world, in purchase for a friend, is gain.

And yet, such a one is but a feeble, destitute, sickly, dying friend. Tell me, then, what is the value of *divine friendship?* Here the friend is rich, omnipotent, unchangeable, everlasting. When you come to die, the arms of your human friend must resign you, and he will commit the body he loved to dust and corruption. But at that moment, when his love avails you nothing, God's love avails you most. When all things else fail, God is present. He cheers "the valley of the shadow of death"—"he watches over the dust of his saints,"—and the spirit he assumes into his glorious presence above, to enjoy the everlasting fruits of his love. O let us aspire, with the strongest affection of our souls, towards God. Perceiving the emptiness of all creatures and their comparative vanity, let us give all, all up, when they interfere, that we may obtain the love of God. May God, "who is love," breathe upon our cold hearts; purify them from corrupt affections, shed abroad in them the love of himself, by his spirit, and increase in us the holy and blessed affection, till it shall attain an inconceivable degree of purity and perfection, in the heavenly, in the eternal world. The joy, unspeakable and full of glory will be our's; but all the praise be his forever and ever. Amen.

# SERMON VI.

## HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS THE CONSEQUENCE OF FOLLOWING THE LAMB.

REVELATION xiv. 4.

These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

There is a great deal in the book of the Revelation of St. John, which is exceedingly obscure, and which has been variously interpreted by those who have commented on this portion of sacred Scripture. Some of our ablest expositors on the other parts of the New-Testament, have stopped short of the Apocalypse, and forborn the attempt to explain any part, where so much was beyond the comprehension.

But, notwithstanding some parts of the book are dark, and those, especially, which relate to prophecies not yet fulfilled, others are clear and intelligible, and the whole book is interspersed with instruction, and precious promises, and such lively descriptions of heav-

only blessedness, as cannot fail to interest and affect the reader.

It is observable in this book, that when some calamitous period of the church is foretold, there soon follows a description of the happiness of those, who have passed through it with christian integrity and firmness; a happiness, which is quite an overbalance for all the sufferings, which the faithful disciples of Jesus have been called to endure. Such prophetic representations of trials firmly endured, and of the happiness succeeding, as a gracious reward, have a tendency to prepare the followers of Christ, in other ages, to meet their own trials with fortitude, and to sustain them in moments when christian integrity and virtue are in the greatest danger. The wisdom and goodness of the great Head of the church are worthy of our thankful admiration, since by the spirit of prophecy he has made provision against the ill effects of persecution, and extends support and consolation to his faithful friends in those seasons, when, without this aid, they might faint and sink in the sharp conflict. The chapter, preceding the context, gives a representation of the rise and establishment of the papal power, and of the dreadful cruelties, practised by the man of sin. And what can sustain those who are called to bear the burden and heat of this day of persecution? What, but a prospect of the blessedness of the high and holy place. To this, the enraptured apostle saw some of the faithful disciples of Jesus safely arrived; and the scene is described in the chapter connected with the text. In

his vision, he saw a Lamb, standing on Mount Sion, surrounded by a vast company, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads," as a mark of the divine approbation and acknowledgement. They were occupied in the solemn worship of the heavenly temple, with angels, and with saints of former and later times; and they were singing a new song, the full understanding of which was peculiar to those who had escaped the pollutions of the world. "These are they," says the text, "who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." In these words a character is concisely, but strongly drawn—the character of true christians; a character, by which they are as much distinguished from the rest of the world, as by the glory and blessedness, to which the apostle saw them exalted. Those whom John heard singing in the mansions of the blessed, while on earth, followed the Lamb whithersoever he led them. If we would indulge the cheering hope of rising to that blessedness, the same must be our character, the same our course of life while here.

Let us, then, seriously consider in this discourse, the meaning of the expression, "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;" and the connexion of this character with heavenly blessedness.

I. Then, let us consider the meaning and extent of the expression, "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The Lamb, or Christ, is here set in opposition to *the man of sin*, in the preceding chapter, who assumed dominion over a great part of the world. He is represented as a general at the head of his army,

and as followed by faithful persons, distinguished from others, who had deserted his banner; that is, had apostatized from the purity of his religion, and had gone over to the enemy of truth and righteousness. Elsewhere, in this book, Christ is represented as a leader, contending against the adversaries of his cause, and having with him a body of those who are called, and chosen, and faithful. By *following* Christ, then, we are to understand, a pure and invincible attachment to him as our divinely appointed leader, and the support of a character and conduct, corresponding to such affection.

Such is the general account of following Christ. Permit me to illustrate the point, by descending to particulars; and

1st. He who follows Christ, has a settled faith in his authority to command; that "all power is given unto him in heaven and earth,"—that "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." The scriptures are full in declaring, that Christ is exalted at the right hand of power; and those who follow him, account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, "that he is set as king on the holy hill of Sion." Thus following Christ, is an acknowledgement of his authority, and right to lead. Others may pretend to a power and right to guide and restrain the consciences of men, and to determine their modes of faith and worship, as the bishop of Rome has done, and many, even among Protestants,

assume to do; the one taking away the scriptures from the people, and the other denying christian privileges and even the christian name to those who interpret the scriptures differently from themselves. But the character in the text admits no authority but what is subordinate to that of Christ, and is exercised consistently with his own revealed will. He keeps ever in mind the words of Christ himself, "Call no man Rabbi, or master, or father upon earth; for one is your master and all ye are brethren." Any absolute decision of religious matters, or denial of the right of any—of *all* to interpret the will of God, revealed in his word, for themselves, the true follower of Christ regards as an usurpation of the authority of the great Head of the church. And that honor which is due to him alone, he refuses to give to any man, or body of men, uninspired. But,

2. They who follow Christ not only firmly believe his authority; they listen attentively and submissively to his command. They are solicitous to know his will; and they search in the divine word, to learn "what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The sincerity of those professions of attachment to Christ is much to be suspected, which are unattended with diligence to learn his requisitions. "I follow Christ so far as I know his will," may be the anguage of some, who have very limited conceptions of him, and of his gospel; and this, not through any deficiency of natural talents, or suitable opportunity to enlarge them, but because they have used no proper diligence to that important end. They content them-

selves in culpable ignorance. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!" was the exclamation of the awakened Paul; and the same disposition is characteristic of every sincere follower of Jesus. It is not his art to know as little as possible of the will of Christ, that he may have the less difficulty to perform it. He desires that his knowledge may be perfect, that his obedience may approach as nearly as possible to perfection. And he knows that he must be *active* to acquire this knowledge; for to suppose that it is imparted to the mind, without any effort on his part to acquire it, would be absurd and dishonorable to the grace of God. If this precious knowledge is imparted in a direct and sovereign way, it is difficult to say why a revelation has been given for us to consult. Men do not become eminent in any art or science, or in any profession or station, without study, and the use of proper means Can we suppose, then, that inquiry is needless to be made into the requisites of the christian character, as drawn by the great Teacher, in the gospel? The word of Christ is profitable for instruction in righteousness, "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." With what diligence, then, should that blessed word be consulted. It should be the subject of our meditation, day and night. It is by this that our heavenly leader guides his people, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." This, this is now the pillar of cloud and of fire, by which he guides us to the land of everlasting rest. I proceed to add farther—

3. "Following the Lamb," implies not only an acknowledgement of his authority, and diligence to learn his will, but a *cheerful obedience* to it. And in this is implied,

1. A *profession of his name.* The disciples of Christ are not ashamed to assume the proper badge of their relation to him, whatever it be that he appoints for that purpose. Some, of a diffident temper, may have scruples on the subject, about their sincerity, and their right to the privilege, which may detain them, for a season, from a public profession. But none, who can be justly styled followers of the Lamb, will refrain from the fullest profession, either through shame, or a reluctance to incur its duties and self-denial. And far from contentment with the omission of any ordinances which Christ has appointed, especially the affectionate memorial of his dying love, they devoutly labor to remove their scruples, and to improve their graces, that they may, in the most public manner, avow their high respect and warm attachment to their heavenly leader.

2. It need scarcely be said, that the follower of the Lamb is a strict observer of his will, in all its moral branches. Christ himself was holy, and so must his disciples be. The warmest professions of faith and attachment to him, he will disregard or rebuke, which are not accompanied by those moral duties, implied in sobriety, righteousness, and charity, which are of everlasting obligation. These duties in the gospel are exacted and enforced with arguments entirely new, and of infinite weight. "Without holiness no man can see

the Lord." And however constantly men may have pretended an allegiance to Christ, if they have done iniquity, they will be rejected in the final day.

Such, my friends, is the character, drawn in concise terms in the text. The follower of the Lamb firmly believes his authority, sincerely seeks to know his will, and resolutely yields obedience to him, in his positive and moral commands.

There is one striking clause on which I have not yet remarked—follow the Lamb *whithersoever he goeth.* This last clause is important. There are many, who, like Naaman, wish to be pardoned in a few things, which they design to do or omit, and who hope, on such terms, to be acknowledged disciples of Christ. But our blessed leader admits not of the idea of a partial and compromising obedience. "We must follow him whithersoever he goeth." By this clause, then, we learn that the true christian shrinks not from the commands of his Master, into whatever present dangers, difficulties, and sacrifices they lead him. It is not *his* calculation to assume the obligation of the religion of Jesus, just so far as may consist with his ease, convenience, or secular advantage. It is a warfare he has entered, and he is resolved to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. He adopts the animating language of Paul—"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy." Thus, if we would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, we must render to him an obedience, affectionate, uniform, and universal.

But it is time to show—

II. Under the *second* branch of this discourse, the necessary connexion between heavenly blessedness, and the character we have been considering. These, that is, those who sung the new song before the throne, peculiar to the blessed, "these are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." It is certainly most reasonable to expect that those only, who under the dispensation of the gospel, have a governing respect to its author, should inherit its everlasting blessings. Those, who refuse to own or at least to submit to his authority, have not the temper or habits which qualify them to be happy in heaven. Neither could it be equitable in the righteous judge, "who loveth righteousness, and whose countenance beholdeth the upright," to confer his blessings indiscriminately on the evil and the good, on his friends and foes, in that world which is to rectify the disorders and inequalities of the present. Nor would it comport with the most solemn declarations which he has left recorded in his word. "Those who confess him before men, will he confess before his Father and the holy angels; and those who deny him here, will he deny in the great day of his appearing." Men are ever seeking some easy means of attaining heaven. It is surprising how eagerly they adopt any plan, in the humblest degree plausible, which promises to abate something of the terms of salvation. Because Jesus is styled the Lamb, some are ready to conclude, such is his gentleness, that he will be their friend, even if they refuse in some im-

portant respects to follow him. Others have such views of his sacrifice, as procuring their salvation, as to fancy any qualifications on their part unnecessary for admission to heaven, and the enjoyment of its blessedness. But such lauding of the grace of Christ is high dishonour to his authority. It is true, Christ hath the meekness of the Lamb, and is mild and compassionate; but being Head over all things to the church, he will never sink the character of its constituted Ruler and Judge in an indiscriminate compassion. Never may we carry the thoughts of his tenderness to such an extent as to encourage the neglect of his will and disregard of his authority. We receive his grace in vain if we make it an encouragement to sin, or to hope for heaven in the neglect of his authority and will. Without holiness there can be no enjoyment of heaven, and without following Christ, no effectual motive to holiness. Thus the connexion between heavenly blessedness and following Christ is evident and necessary. It is founded not only on the will of him who bestows it, but in the nature of the thing itself.

With a few reflections we will close the subject.

1. In view of what has been said, we should be induced to compare our own character with that so concisely, but clearly drawn in the text. Great blessedness is attached to this character; we are deeply concerned then to ascertain whether it be our own. Do we resemble it, and how far? Are we anxious to follow the Lamb? Have we cheerfully and practically acknowledged his authority? Have we submitted to his

will, in whatever precepts it has been made known to us? Have we been inquisitive to learn his will? Or do we love darkness rather than light, and avoid inquiring too closely, lest the sphere of duty should be enlarged, and our work prove more difficult. And even of those things which we know to be our duty, let me ask, do we not select some, and decline others; attempt those which are easy, and require little self-denial, and reject those which call for a severe struggle? When it was our duty to adopt some course of conduct which opposed our appetite, our pleasure, or our temporal advantage, have we not excused ourselves in the words of Naaman—"In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant?" If this we have done and done it habitually too, can we lay claim to the character in the text, or indulge a just hope of heavenly blessedness? Surely, this is not following the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. It is perferring some favourite passion to his will, our selfish pleasure to our duty. These are gross and palpable defects in christian character. There are other defects more specious, because they assume the show of humility; but they are defects still, and betray the spirit of disobedience: I mean the neglect of positive ordinances, which Christ has appointed. In regard to these, how many are they who live in habitual neglect and disobedience? The precept is plain and peremptory—"This do in remembrance of me." "I dare not," is the reply of many. "I fear I should do it unworthily." But—"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice

of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Where the command is plain and unqualified, is it not presumptuous to stand questioning the propriety of obeying it? Is it the part of a good soldier to question the orders of his leader, or to judge of the expediency of them, or even of the peril of implicit obedience?

But let me ask, if the plea of unfitness is not often advanced for neglecting ordinances, when some other unworthy reason has a determining influence? One is afraid of the remark of men, that with a christian profession he is no better than others. Another fears he must be less conformed to the world, than he feels inclined to be, should he come to the holy table. Another apprehends, that if he should comply with this, he must, to be consistent, attend on some other duties, which at present he can omit without great self-reproach. A fourth thinks he can be more censorious, or suspicious, or unreconciled, and uncharitable to others, if he assumes not the obligations of the christian profession. In a word, how many are there who think they can live a little more freely, or, in plainer words, can trespass more boldly on forbidden ground, if they refrain from profession; and for this reason, secretly, if not avowedly, they decline the holy ordinances. Is this humility, or is it the love of the world, that love of the world with which the love of God cannot consist? Let those who neglect the special ordinances of Christ from year to year, consider how palpably inconsistent this neglect is with the christian character of the text, and

with the blessedness annexed to it. Let them seriously inquire the reasons of the neglect, and whether it be not more the fear of man than the fear of God, more the love of the world than the apprehension that they should bring dishonour on Christ, or injury to his cause.

2. Of what immense importance is it to every individual of this assembly that he be a follower of the Lamb; that he follow him *whithersoever he goeth.* Eternal happiness in the heavens depends upon our thus doing. We think it much to have a prospect of success for life: to be established in business; to be well settled in domestic life; to have agreeable connexions; and goods laid up for many years. But what is this, compared with the glorious reward of following Christ? What, to an establishment for eternity in the mansions of bliss, to admission to the company of the blessed, to the vision of the Lamb in all his celestial glory; nay, to sit with him in his throne, as he has promised to them who follow him in the regeneration. "For to him that overcometh" says Jesus, "will I grant to sit down with him in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Such promises are extended to us all on the reasonable condition of our following the Lamb. Let us then shrink from no labour or sufferings, no watching, or self-denial, which our Master requires. The trial is short, the reward of fidelity endless.

3. The sincere followers of the Lamb, not only have this glorious reward in reversion, but the cheer-

ing hope of it may well fill them with songs in the house of their pilgrimage. To what a company and scene are they not hastening? Those gone before them, are singing the new song before the throne, are enjoying a state of sublime happiness in the presence of their God and Redeemer, and in the performance of the most exalted acts of worship. And through faith and patience they will soon enter upon the same promises. Look up then, ye true followers of the Lamb, look up to the seats of unmingled joy. By a lively faith, hear ye not the songs of the sanctified? And are you not in the way to join the blessed company? If this be your hope and consolation, think nothing of the difficulties which obstruct your way, except how you shall overcome them. Practice self-denial with cheerfulness in whatever form it may be presented. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world, that you may be welcome companions of your spotless leader.

God grant us grace to believe the authority, and in all instances, even to the highest self-denial, to obey the will of our heavenly Leader and Redeemer. Then may we be assured that we shall mingle at last in that great company which no man can number, and sing the new song of Moses and the Lamb.

# SERMON VII.

## THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO COMFORT AND EDIFY ONE ANOTHER.

### PART. I.

I. Thessalonians v, 11.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together; and edify one another, even as also ye do.

In the close of the chapter preceding the text, the apostle had given a most animating description of Christ's coming at the last day to raise the dead, and, first and chiefly, those that sleep in Jesus. And this he suggested as matter of the highest comfort to those who had committed christian friends to the dust. He proceeds in the context to speak of the suddenness, with which that day should come; and as they were apprized of the fact,—that they should be vigilant and prepared for it, "being sober, and putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of

salvation." Then in the verses preceding the text, he speaks of the gracious disposition of God towards us, in these affecting terms—"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, the design of God in sending his son into the world, was not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He did not reveal the gospel unto mankind, that they might sin with the greater aggravation, and so be the more severely punished. But the motive was *love*, and the design was *mercy*. And he hath appointed none to wrath, but such as wilfully and obstinately refuse his gracious offers, and persist in vice and wickedness. For it is his pleasure that all, if they will, should obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, "who died for us; that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Then follows the exhortation of our text, evidently founded on these momentous facts and expectations, the death of Christ to secure our salvation, and his coming to raise his disciples from the dead, that they might live together with him in perfect glory and happiness—"Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another; even as also ye do."

The doctrine of the text, then, in connexion with the context, is—That it is the duty of Christians to comfort one another in view of the *death* of Christ, to promote their salvation, and of his *coming* at the last day to raise his sincere disciples from the dead, and to receive them to dwell with him in eternal glory.

I shall observe the natural division of the text, and show that it is the duty of Christians,

I. To comfort one another.

II. To edify one another.

It is their duty—

I. To comfort one another. This is a duty to be performed, I acknowledge, with discretion, and some caution. The consolations of the gospel belong not to all, with whom we meet and converse; nor even to all who bear the christian name. In a wide and lax sense, all who are born in a christian land, and have received a christian education, and acknowledge the christian scriptures as a divine revelation, are denominated christians. It is language sufficiently exact to distinguish Christians from Mahometans and Pagans. "But they are not all Israel, who are of Israel—neither is he a Jew, who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." Nor is he a Christian who was born in a christian land, and acknowledges the truth of divine revelation, and attends on visible ordinances, if this be all, especially, if there be, habitually, circumstances of contradiction in the life and conduct. When we impart the consolations of the gospel, we must remember that *he* to whom they belong is a christian in a stricter sense—that there is no such person, strictly speaking, as an unsanctified Christian; a profane, an intemperate, an impure Christian; nor a malicious, slanderous, revengeful Christian; nor one who lives in wilful sin of any kind, or wilful neglect of duty. We should be very improperly engaged in ten-

dering the consolations of the gospel to any such persons. To flatter them as religious, while they live irreligiously, would be crying peace to those, for whom there is no peace, and blessing them whom God hath not blessed.

With this caution, I proceed to say, *It is an important duty for Christians to comfort one another.* There are many dull and gloomy Christians. They are in the habit of looking always on the dark side of things. If they look abroad, they can discern little or no religion around them; and if they look into their own hearts they find little to encourage them. They seem always to dwell in the valley of the shadow of death; and to have no comfort but the melancholy one of continual complaining of others and bemoaning themselves. But this is a diseased state of mind, from which various evils are apt to result. It gives occasion of reproach upon religion, as a gloomy thing, and as tending to involve, and as having involved persons in delirious melancholy. Its personal influence is bad; it chills the affections, and stupifies the energies of the soul; so that it attempts less and less in the spiritual life; till discouragement grows into deadness. Many such have I seen and lamented to see. In some cases, I apprehend, there may be a degree of hypocrisy in these mourners and complainers, wishing to pass themselves as having a deeper sense of sin than others have. But many are in real spiritual affliction, while yet they have the scriptural grounds of hope. This affliction often arises from bodily indisposition; from distempered nerves; from wrong views of religion; from dwelling

on mysterious and incomprehensible subjects; from not distinguishing between the beginnings of religion in the soul and that ultimate perfection, into which it may be expected to grow. "But they should not despise the day of small things;" for God does not. If they can perceive that, if they know their hearts, religion is with them "the one thing needful;" that its blessings are more desirable and precious, than all worldly riches, honors, and pleasures, and even life itself—and, while depressed and humbled, as Peter was, they still can appeal and say—"Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"—there is no room for despondence. To check this unbecoming and unprofitable gloom, Christians should converse much with each other. They should bring their religion out of the closet into company. There is nothing so enlivening and animating as religious conversation. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend." This is seen among common minds. A nervous depression of the spirits, nurtured in solitude, vanishes as a cheerful friend enters. And religious gloom is often banished by the visit and conversation of a judicious christian friend. He turns up the bright side of things to him, who had looked only on the dark; and the mourning Christian is relieved. He finds, that the truths of the gospel are as the pillar of cloud was in the passage of the Red Sea—a cloud and darkness seen in one point of view, but a most cheering light, and faithful guide to safety seen in another. Christians, then, should comfort one another. The strong should support the weak;

the experienced should illustrate the nature of the christian life to those who are perplexed with fears and doubts, and show that something right may consist with something wrong, at least with something less perfect than we could wish. Many Christians rest in *general* views of themselves—they fear they have not been born again—they fear their ground of hope is hollow—and that they shall never attain salvation. Let a christian friend put them upon a *particular* examination, and address questions, which will elicit the real state of their hearts. "With all your imperfections, do you allow yourself in any known sin? Do you willfully neglect known duty? Do you long and strive for a closer walk with God? Do you love his law; do you approve the scheme of salvation by faith in Christ? Do you love the brethren? Do you follow after peace with all men, and holiness?" Detailed questions of this kind will ordinarily call forth honest answers, which will lighten the fears, and perhaps dispel the painful doubts of many a feeble and humble Christian.

But the exhortation "comfort yourselves together," refers not merely to Christians of a melancholy turn but to Christians generally. For few, even of those who really deserve the name of Christians, derive from their hope all the comfort they ought. They are too dull and heavy for persons who have such glorious prospects before them. They are not often enough engaged in spiritual conversation; in considering the grounds of their hope; the foundation of it laid in the provision of a saviour. Or, they are not careful enough in the exami-

nation of their personal title and interest in the salvation of the gospel, or ardent enough to improve their evidences of piety to such a degree as shall be decisive to their minds, and cast out perplexing and uneasy doubts. It is, I believe, very common that persons, sincerely christian, enjoy little of the consolations of the gospel, through this kind of negligence and inattention. Let them, then, strive together to correct the evil; and to animate one another; to enkindle a high degree of interest in each other as to their salvation. How soon, with a divine blessing, would religious conversation, so conducted, dispel their dulness and heaviness; how soon would it lead to a more profitable improvement of their private moments; so that they would examine themselves more closely and with better judgment, and come to a juster understanding of themselves, and to brighter hopes and more abundant consolation.

But the connexion of the text, as shown in the opening of the discourse, seems to point out a particular method of performing this mutual duty. *Wherefore* comfort yourselves together—Here the particle *wherefore* refers us to three foregoing texts with which we should comfort one another—1. "God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ—2. Christ hath died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him—3. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first—and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The first of these texts, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," is a most cheering view of the character and gracious disposition of the divine Being, with which we may comfort one another. Many minds have been weighed down into a morbid melancholy by an apprehension that God by an absolute decree of predestination has appointed some to wrath, in which fatal appointment they, for aught they know, may be comprehended. It is not so according to this passage; but the very reverse. He hath *appointed* that we should obtain salvation by Christ, and nothing but our unbelief and negligence can prevent it. The current of scripture runs with the spirit of this text. God desires not, and therefore he decrees not, the death of the sinner; but he desires his repentance, that he may live. There is no bar on God's part, it is all on our's. Here then is matter for comfort and mutual gratulation. And how should we delight to converse on the grace of God, the original of gospel salvation; and warm our hearts and the hearts of others into humble and joyful confidence in his mercy to the penitent. It is reproachful to such goodness to indulge gloomy doubts of his sincerity; or for a moment to suspect that there is a secret decree, controlling his revealed promises; or that his provision of salvation is limited, when he says—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

But as the guilty are apt to be distrustful, he has given a strong and affecting token to inspire their confidence. "He hath not spared his own son, but freely

given him up for us all." The apostle naturally asks in the view of this astonishing fact—"how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

This leads us to the *second* argument, by which the apostle would have Christians comfort one another —"Christ hath *died for us*, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." There is something striking, astonishing in the plan of salvation. The son of God is sent to be the minister of his mercy. He makes his miraculous entrance into the world—Angels proclaim and celebrate it—miracles attend continually on his steps—the divine excellency of his doctrine, and the divine purity of his life with those miracles, evince his character as the son of God—and yet this exalted being terminates his ministry of mercy by the death of the cross—not by surprise, but according to his own prediction of his Father's appointment, and the foretelling of the prophets from the beginning of the world. What event can be imagined, that could give so strong an assurance that God is in earnest to show mercy to his guilty and wretched children, if penitent? Let us, then, comfort one another by a frequent reference in our conversation to this event, at which heaven and earth were in amazement, as the immoveable ground of hope to man. It must never be forgotten, while we live. We must celebrate it in our morning and evening songs, and bless God for it in our daily prayers. These sacred walls must continually resound with the doctrine of Christ and him crucified. In our monthly memorial at the holy table, we must with hearts melted into penitence, love, and gratitude

bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the plan of mercy, begun in the counsels of eternity, advancing under different dispensations, and at length consummated on the cross.

There is one method and argument farther, with which the apostle would have us comfort ourselves together, if we be Christians indeed. It is by looking forward to the glorious scenes in eternity—according to the third text referred to—"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first—and so shall we ever be with the Lord." If the minds of Christians were daily familiarized to the glorious scenes here predicted; did they meditate upon them with the interest they should excite in the sincere and practical believer; did they converse with one another upon them, as things most certain, and in which they have an unspeakable personal concern, what a different thing would be the life they lead! with what ardour would they press on in their heavenly journey! with what zeal would they run their christian race! with what increasing indifference would they regard earthly things, while their minds were habitually engaged with the strong anticipation of the awful glories of the judgment morning, and the thrilling hope of meeting their judge in peace, and of being confessed as his disciples before his Father and the holy angels, and of rising with him, at the close of the tremendous scene, into his eternal glory, to be forever with the Lord. Christians, then, should bear these future certainties very much in mind. We cannot be much in-

terested by things of which we seldom think. Neglecting to think of them, a sort of unbelief is generated; and we may gradually come to live as though they were little more than serious fictions; which God forbid. From the top of Pisgah, how did the swimming eyes of Moses gaze on the paradise that spread itself out before him, on the other side of Jordan—the fair cities, the green hills, the fruitful vallies, the clear fountains, and the glittering streams, of which, alas, he was never to take possession. And will not Christians look with a deeper interest, beyond the cold flood of death, on the heavenly Canaan, to them a promised land, and soon to be entered, and never to be wrested from them? Will they not animate their zeal, to brighten their title to mansions in the heavenly Canaan, by often thinking and speaking of the spiritual glories of that brighter world; labouring to learn the language and employments, and to cultivate the affections and dispositions, which are necessary to the enjoyment of its bliss and glory? Let us comfort one another with these things. And remember who hath said, "In my Father's house, are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. God grant this promise may be ours. Amen.

# SERMON VIII.

## THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO COMFORT AND EDIFY ONE ANOTHER.

### PART II.

I. THESSALONIANS v. 11.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together; and edify one another, even as also ye do.

In the preceding discourse, we considered the doctrine of this passage to be—"That it is the duty of Christians to comfort and edify one another in view of the grace of God, and the death of Christ to promote their salvation, and of his coming at the last day to raise his sincere disciples from the dead, and to receive them to dwell with him in immortal glory." In considering the duty of comforting one another as incumbent on Christians, we mentioned that it was an office to be performed with discretion and caution—that the consolations of the gospel belong not to all who assume the christian name, but only to those who give credible

evidences of piety; to none therefore who live in any wilful, habitual sin, or neglect of known duty. With this preliminary caution, we proceeded to consider the important duty of Christians to comfort one another; to cheer those of a melancholy and desponding turn of mind; to discover and remove the causes of unreasonable dejection; to promote in each other generally, more consoling and animating views, by frequent religious conversation; and, particularly, by adverting to the blessed truth, that God hath not by a fatal decree *appointed* any to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ; and that "Christ hath died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." I proceed, in this discourse, to the

II. Second topic proposed; viz. The duty of Christians to *edify* one another. I shall,

I. Very briefly consider what is to be understood by *edifying* one another;

II. Suggest several hints of importance to be regarded in performing the friendly office.

I. What are we to understand by *edifying* one another.

It is a familiar term, and generally understood. It may not so generally be known to be a metaphorical word, signifying to *build up*, as an house or a temple. In sundry passages of the gospel, Christians are represented as "spiritual buildings, or living temples—built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." To *edify* one another, then, is to advance this spiritual building

towards a perfect state; by increasing one another's knowledge, by mutually strengthening faith and hope, and promoting holiness. Without enlarging on this point, already sufficiently clear, I proceed,

II. To suggest several hints of importance to be regarded in performing this friendly office.

1. We should feel a lively interest in each other's spiritual improvement. Without this, we shall most certainly perform the duty very coldly and unprofitably, or neglect it altogether. And is there a spark of sympathy in our souls, if we do not feel any solicitude for each other's everlasting welfare? If we do not feel unfeigned joy, when the christian character of others is bright, and their hope appears well founded, and their prospects of eternal glory clear? Or, on the other hand, if we feel no painful concern, when we perceive some misconduct or fall, some incipient yielding to temptation, some sparks of unholy temper breaking out, which show that all is not right in one whom we wish to esteem as a christian friend? We *should* feel, on these different occasions, gladness or deep regret, as the case may be, or all is not right in our own hearts. It is no light thing, whether one, whom we call a Christian, adorns or disgraces his profession; whether his hope beyond the grave is well founded, or whether we are indifferent respecting it, and as careless as Cain, who bitterly and impiously asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We are not wont to be so indifferent about the *temporal* interests of our friends. If they rise into wealth and honours, we rejoice with

them; if they sink into misfortunes and disgrace, we sorrow for them, and are ready to put forth a hand to advance them to the one, and to prevent the other. And shall we feel less, and do less, when infinitely more is at stake in another world? When the amiable archbishop of Cambray was entrusted with the education of the dauphin, to prepare a prince for the throne, how intense was his sense of responsibility! He watched over him day and night; reasoned with him in his refractory moments, or when they were past; wrote to him in the most winning forms of address; sometimes covering the truth with the veil of allegory, that it might insinuate itself into his heart, and even wrote one of the most interesting of modern epics, that he might place before his pupil the model of a good prince. This deep interest was kept alive in his breast, and he was sustained in this arduous labour, by the hope of seeing his pupil in a future day on the throne, a just and beneficent prince, at once the blessing and glory of his country. Should Christians feel less for one another, than Fenelon for the Dauphin? Christians, to whom is promised, if worthy, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away—a kingdom which shall never be moved." Feeling a lively interest in each other's improvement, then,

2. We should consider in what ways we may be able to advance it. It is a subject, which requires consideration, or many opportunities will go by unimproved, or we may attempt something in so rash and unadvised a way, as to defeat the good end intended.

We must consider the wants, the deficiencies, the dangers or temptations of one another, as also the most promising method of relieving the former, and of obviating the latter. We should cultivate an affectionate intercourse with one another; for this provides frequent opportunities of rendering and of receiving instruction, advice or warning, and will render them the more welcome and effectual. We receive that from a friend, which would offend us from a stranger. And farther, we should cultivate a friendly and easy communication on religious subjects. It is very much to be lamented that this is so rare a thing; and that even Christians can converse with interest on subjects of little importance, while they are silent, or reserved on religious subjects, the most interesting in the world. It argues ignorance where they should be best informed, or indifference where they should feel most deeply. It might be too severe to make this application to all, who are silent on religious subjects. Some doubtless say little from diffidence; through fear lest they should betray their ignorance, or be unable to utter anything that could conduce to edifying, or, as Paul expresses it, "minister grace to the hearers." But from whatever motive it arises, this strangeness and reluctance which Christians too much feel to engage in religious converse, should be overcome. They should advert to divine things often when they meet, like the exemplary Moravians, who, from what observation I was able to make in a visit among them, surpass all other Christians in the ease and unaffectedness, with which they enliven and adorn con-

versation with religious thoughts and allusions. A habit like this, prevalent among Christians, would contribute greatly to their mutual improvement and comfort. It would afford the best opportunity for the suggestion, in an easy and affectionate way, of those practical hints, which all, at times, need to receive. It is a habit, which the blessed Jehovah beholds with peculiar favor, and which he will notice with most distinguished regard, in the great day, according to that beautiful passage of Malachi—"Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name:—And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him."

Let me now remark—

3. That Christians, in order to be *edifying*, should discreetly select the topics of religious conversation. Nothing can be more important than this; for such subjects, of a religious aspect, may be chosen, as may be injurious rather than profitable. Much harm often arises from handling the characters of other Christians, belonging perhaps to other churches, and to other sects, and, of course, not particularly known to those, who so freely decide upon their merits or demerits. There is a great deal of conversation of this sort among many, which is fruitful of mischief. It is apt to breathe a spirit of censure. Peculiarities of faith

and opinion, known or supposed, are condemned; and inferences are drawn from them, which the censured persons utterly disown; and an influence of their faith and opinions on the heart and character is affirmed to be of a pernicious nature, which a better knowledge of the individuals themselves would not justify. It is well known, that, at this evil day, there is very much conversation of this character, to the great prejudice sometimes of private Christians, and sometimes of christian ministers, and of their usefulness too. Such conversation is far enough from being edifying. It tends to destroy the best feelings of the heart in him that speaks, and in him that hears. It quenches charity; it generates an alienated feeling, towards the persons censured and all who favour them, or who join not in the broad and unqualified censure. The consequences are, a disturbed and unhappy state of the religious community; and an occasion of joy and triumph to the enemies of religion. I believe, that many who eye each other askance, and pass each other coldly, and speak of each other bitterly, would be astonished at their own conduct, if they really knew each other. If we wish to *edify* each other, then, we must deal sparingly in personalities about the absent—about persons whom we cannot pretend to know, except by report; remembering the apostle's caution—"Speak not evil, one of another, brethren," and our Lord's rebuke to two of his disciples, who on a certain occasion breathed a similar spirit—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,"—and his rebuke again to the best tempered

of the twelve apostles, John, who said to Jesus, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us."

There is another subject, very apt to engage and engross religious conversation at the present day; I mean matters of controversy. If people could better keep their temper in controversial conversation, and were not so prone to think the *heart* wrong, when they think that the head is not right, possibly some good might come of this kind of conversation. For the subjects in dispute are often important, though not so important as they are wont to think. But I have not often seen that disputants, who sit down to write in their closets, and deliberately to publish, can refrain from unchristian reflections upon their antagonists; and the little light, which may be struck out, is often dearly bought by the loss of good feelings and the ornament of meekness. If those, then, who claim to be considered as leaders, and who should also be exemplars to their weaker brethren, lose something of their temper and graces in conducting controversy from the press, is it to be expected that Christians of humbler talents, and of less experience, in the heat of conversation and of debate, face to face, should preserve good temper and kind feelings, and discuss prudently and profitably? It is expecting too much, I fear, of poor human nature, even in its renovated state. I am inclined to think, therefore, that Christians should not rashly, nor

freely bring their differences into conversation; if they be mentioned at all, they should be dismissed as soon as the temper begins to be ruffled, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit endangered. For although we have all faith, and all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, it avails not, if we have not charity.

Having cautioned against improper, or inexpedient subjects, let me,

4. Mention such as are most profitable, if we are anxious to *edify* one another. Macknight on the text observes, quoting as he says from Chandler, that, "It were much to be wished, that Christians, entering into each other's true interests, would banish from their conversation that calumny, slander, folly and flattery, which engross so much of this short, transitory life; and by discoursing of things of substantial worth, endeavour to fortify each other against the snares of life, and those innumerable temptations which lie in wait to ruin us. With what comfort, he asks, should we meet each other at the great day, were we, on that occasion, able to recollect that in general we had managed our conversation to our mutual advantage! For we should then be sensible, that in some measure we owe our glory to our concern for, and our fidelity to each other. Besides, the remembrance of this will enlarge the love of the saints to each other in the future state." This is a good description, on the whole, of edifying conversation. What is the end to be attained by the gospel? What is the great object of true religion? It is "to redeem us from all iniquity, and

to purify us unto Christ, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This, then, should be the object of religious conversation. It should tend to improve our knowledge on the most important points; to strengthen and enliven our faith in things "unseen and eternal;" to awaken our mutual ardour in seeking "the things which are above," and this by more earnest endeavors to acquire and perfect that character and those dispositions and affections, without which they can never be attained, or if they could, could never be enjoyed.—Here is field enough for the most interesting and animating and improving conversation. We may dwell on the essential elements of Christian character—piety to God, and the duties involved in that comprehensive term, charity to men, and the duties implied in that broad affection; self-government, and the various duties embraced in it. You see we shall not lack argument of religious converse, even if personalities and controversies should be excluded. But when two christian friends are conversing together in affectionate confidence, they may be personal in their conversation; that is, talk over things personal to themselves. They may mention freely their doubts, and fears, and difficulties in their christian course, for the benefit of each other's counsel; and might learn how to vanquish the former, and to surmount the latter. But without enlarging on this fruitful topic,

5. Let me say, that Christians should not always wait till their counsel is asked, but should hasten to speak, when the wants, or dangers, or temptations of

any seem to require it, and they can hope to be useful. The apostle, in the subsequent context, exhorts Christians "to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak." The duty enjoined in regard to the unruly, is not usually welcome, nor desired by him who needs the kindness. Another may see his danger before he himself is aware of it: if he is aware of it, he may be too proud and self-sufficient to desire, or take kindly the warning given. But we must not suffer sin upon our neighbour, without rebuke. Let it be done with the kindest feelings, and in the gentlest manner, for its efficacy may depend on the manner. And when a soul is to be saved from death, and a multitude of sins to be hidden, it richly deserves our best endeavours and our best manner. The "feeble minded" must be comforted. They may not desire our friendly efforts to relieve them; they are wont to suffer in secret, and to shrink from observation. But they are to be truly pitied in their spiritual dejection; and we should approach them as the physican draws the curtain of a sick friend; and listen to their tale of symptoms, and apply those remedies which the gospel so richly provides. "We must sustain the weak." There are always Christians of this description, who need the care of others. They are in danger of being misled by interested guides, of having their passions improperly excited, and of imbibing prejudices, and thus of being soured in their temper, and perhaps drawn into disorder. They may be in danger from temptations, of which they stand not in

proper fear—and if left to themselves, may fall into sins of sensuality. Much may be done for Christians of this description, and much ought to be done to preserve them in that course which shall be safe to themselves and honorable to religion.

But it is time for me to close this important subject. Let us remember the double duty of our text, and comfort and edify one another, by a wise and discreet, by an affectionate and faithful conversation. And let us give a deep and affecting interest to our religious conversation, by a frequent reference to the rich grace of God, "who has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and to the death of our compassionate Redeemer, which he willingly endured for us, with all the horrors of the cross, that he might bring many sons and daughters to glory. And let us animate one another to zeal and persevering fidelity in our holy course, by the certain expectation of the Saviour, at the last day, to judge the quick and the dead, and to carry them back with him to heavenly glory. God grant that we may be of the number, his sincere and faithful disciples.

Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

# SERMON IX.

## FAMILY RELIGION.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

This was the pious resolution of Joshua, announced to the tribes of Israel, assembled before him. He gives a very concise account of God's goodness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to the twelve tribes, who descended from them; of their deliverance from Egypt, their passage of the Red sea, their wars with the Amorites, and Moabites, and their victories, and finally of their passage over Jordan, and their entrance into possession of the land of promise. In the view of God's signal goodness to them, he solemnly exhorts them "to fear the Lord, and to serve him in sincerity and truth;" at the same time he regards them with jealousy, and manifests anxiety, lest they should fail of a due return for benefits received. Joshua had too

lively and painful a remembrance of the fickle disposition of that people in the wilderness, not to fear how they would conduct themselves, now settled and prosperous in Canaan; but he most solemnly exhorted them to fidelity to Jehovah. "If it seem evil to you, said he, to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve,"—but, propounding his own faithful example, he added "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The effect, at least for the time, of this appeal, was what he intended it should be; for the people answered as with one voice, "God forbid, that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. We will serve the Lord, for he is our God." Without enlarging on the historical view of the text, let me say, that it is most solemnly incumbent on every head of a family to adopt the pious resolution of Joshua, and to live up to it.—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The temptation, which most easily beset the Israelites, was idolatry, with the licentious indulgences which always followed in its train. The temptations, to which men are now liable, are forgetfulness of God, neglect of his worship and ordinances, an eagerness after the world and its pleasures, the fear of man, and of being singular, even if it be to be singularly good. I am anxious, if God may succeed my feeble efforts, to aid you in making and keeping the resolution of the valiant and pious Joshua; the resolution to maintain *family religion*. In doing this, I shall endeavour,

I. To show a few important things implied in family religion.

II. Consider arguments and encouragements which should decide parents to maintain it. I am,

I. To show a few things implied in family religion. Under this head I shall confine myself chiefly to two important things; family prayer and family instruction.

1. Family prayer.

This can scarcely be touched too often, so many are the benefits resulting from it, and so many the evils which inevitably flow from its neglect. Family prayer is, perhaps, the very first thought which starts up to the mind from the words of Joshua; and few would think that resolution kept in a family, where worship was wholly neglected. It seems the very principle and beginning of every thing which is religious in a family. It is a direct acknowledgment of God, and of the duty and obedience which we owe to him. And something of this nature has been kept up by pious men from the beginning of the world. Before the flood, "men began to call on the name of the Lord." Noah in the midst of his family erected an altar, and offered up his devotions to God in the form, then most striking and edifying. And Abraham and the Patriarchs followed his example; David also and Solomon were devout men in the presence of their assembled people, and the former returned from public worship to bless his household; and how much pains he took to fan the sacred flame in his own bosom, and in the hearts of his family, we may see in the book of Psalms, some of which

were evidently intended for domestic use. Indeed, the prophet seemed to regard domestic prayer as the distinctive mark of a pious man; and such Jews as neglected it, he subjects to the same condemnation as the impious heathen—"Pour out,—or thou wilt, pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." It seems as if our blessed Lord was anxious in this important respect, to exhibit his own persuasive example. For although he had no home, not even "where to lay his head," yet adopting the twelve as his family, he prayed with them, and took special pains to instruct them in the genuine spirit of devotion. That family prayer should come thus strongly recommended, by scriptural example, is not strange, when we consider the excellent tendencies of it. It solemnizes a family, and tends to make religious impressions on their minds; inspires reverence for the head, and a deeper degree of affection to him, when he is seen interceding with God in their behalf. It strengthens his authority and influence in the family, so that order and obedience are more easily preserved. And it affords excellent opportunities of imparting instruction, counsel, reproof, and comfort, as they may be needed in a family, whether by a word spoken in season, or by a portion read from the word of God, or other edifying books. Such, and so important is family prayer. I feel a deep solicitude, that it may be general, universal in the families of my beloved people. O what a different face would it immediately put upon religion among us! If the breath of prayer might as-

cend from every house, it would betoken great life and spirit in your religion. I beseech every head of a family to engage in this duty; to follow the bright example of patriarchs and of the pious of every age; to feel a deep solicitude for the early piety of his children, which can in no way more certainly be insinuated into their hearts, and strengthened, than by family devotion. Let not the usual excuses, unfounded as they are, prevent this essential part of family religion. Inability can with no propriety be pleaded, since there have been so many excellent books of family devotion published, to aid in the important duty. There are many excellent forms of family prayer, by familiarity with any of which the mind would be stored with devout thoughts and expressions, which would enable a person of moderate powers of mind to lead in family devotion with great interest and edification. If still there be a want of self possession, a form from any of these books may be selected and read in the midst of the assembled family, and thus God be devoutly acknowledged, and the family edified. In this way, most certainly, every father of a family, who can read, may pray with his household; and, in this manner, by far the greater number of devout families in the christian world are daily led to the throne of grace. The Catholic church, the English church, the Greek church, and Lutheran, have liturgies and pray by forms in their houses as well as churches; and many who belong to denominations that prefer extemporaneous prayer, avail themselves of written forms, as they ought to do, when they are per-

suaded that they will be more acceptable to God and edifying to their fellow worshippers. Our Lord has put his sanction upon the use of forms, by having given one to his disciples, and transmitted it in his gospel. In extemporaneous prayer, then, or in forms prepared by devout men, once more let me beseech my beloved people to be in the habit of family prayer, as a most important branch of family religion. I proceed to speak,

2. Of family *instruction* as an essential part and means of family religion.

This is exceedingly important, and, I fear, is too much neglected. Children are instructed at school; they are instructed, and sometimes particularly addressed in the house of God. These things are important, but not so efficient as parental instruction at home. There the interested parent can begin with his child at a tender age. In simple words, he can teach him great truths concerning God, and Christ, and heaven; and inculcate duty, and warn against sin, and ingraft instruction on the incidents of every day, and enforce it by gentle discipline, by rewards and punishments, smiles and frowns, as circumstances may require. How much may be done before the third or fourth year of the infant's life! How distinct and durable may be made the best impressions on the infant mind which is then as wax, but will soon harden into a state almost impenetrable. On the pure tablet of a child's mind the diligent and tender hand of the mother may write lessons the most precious, and indeli-

ble; for the earliest impressions are the last to be effaced. Will the anxious mother dare neglect the pleasing and hopeful task? Will the parents suffer the infant period of their children's life to pass with little done for them, but to provide food and clothing for the body? Or will they not endeavor to inspire that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom;" and impart that understanding of duty, which shall cause them "to depart from evil?" If they neglect this higher duty, the time will come when their aching heads will lie on thorny pillows, and their hearts will be stung with the anguish of self-reproach. It is recorded as a special reason why Abraham was honored as the *friend of God*, that he would attend to the religious instruction of his family. "I know him, said Jehovah, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Moses well understood the immense importance of parental instruction, and solemnly demanded of parents "to teach their children diligently, and to talk to them of the divine commandments when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up, and to write them upon the posts of their houses, and on their gates." The wisest of men, in accordance with these examples and injunctions, both renews the command and enforces it with great encouragement.—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The New Testament follows up the earnest instruction of the Old,

and with still more weighty considerations, urges parents to devote their children to God, as they ever had been in solemn covenant from the days of Abraham, and to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Let there not be, then, one parent in this assembly, that neglects the religious instruction of his children. It is the highest duty you owe to them; it is, in their tender years, the *one thing needful* for them. Neglect it, and you may justly expect, that they will be ignorant, vicious, and wretched here, and that their future ruin will lie at your door. Attend to it with diligence, and with prayer for God's blessing on the humble means, and you may trust in the divine promises, that they will grow up to be children of consolation to you, and your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Let us proceed to the second head of discourse,

II. And consider some of the arguments and encouragements which should decide and animate parents to maintain family religion, both in devotion and in instruction—And

1. Other care and labor is for the *body;* this is for the *soul*. *That* is for things which perish with the using; *this* for meat which endureth to everlasting life; for a treasure and interest, continually rising in importance and value, through ages never ending. Do you commend the man who is industrious and saving, early in life, that he may have the means of sustaining a growing family and himself in declining years, and may leave a blessing to his children? How much more es-

timable is he, whose foresight extends into eternity, and who is supremely anxious that himself and family may obtain favor with God, and eternal life and happiness; a mansion among the blessed; an inheritance unfading. If we would imitate that wiser man, we must maintain family devotion and instruction. Again—

2. The head of a family receives a solemn charge, from God, of those under his roof. It is a great trust, and God will take account how it is fulfilled. You may nourish them, clothe them, watch against the dangers that threaten their life and health; but this is but the minor part; for they have souls worth more than worlds, for which you must watch and pray. And if while you are here and there, attending to more trifling matters, these souls be lost, will not God require them? It is a solemn thought, that the head of a family is put in trust with souls. Should he not then pray with them, and for them, and "watch for souls as one who must give account?"

3. The difficulty of his task should be an argument, not for discouragement, but the greater exertion. To check a child's evil propensities, to encourage in him what is right, to impart necessary knowledge, and to fix in his heart good principles, and to form him to right habits of affection, temper and conduct, is a mighty task. To rear up a child into a Christian, is the noblest labor performed on earth. And will not the parent, while crying "who is sufficient for these things," call upon God who is every way sufficient, and do his utmost? If he succeed, glory, and honor, and immor-

tality is his reward. The difficulty of this task, then, should animate him to diligence in instruction, and to fervor and constancy in family devotion. To animate and encourage him, he should consider

4. What present *comfort* will flow from success.—"I have no greater joy," said an apostle, "than to see my children walking in the truth." Every faithful minister can say the same, and every good parent. It is a sight to draw tears from strangers, to see a family well instructed, of serious spirit, dutiful and affectionate, devoted to God and devout, a heavenly temper duly manifested—and all apparently growing up into a meetness for a better world, and cherishing the hope of a final meeting there. Such present happiness is worth a mighty and a constant effort on the part of the parents. The two great means to this end are prayer and instruction—family prayer—parental instruction. Consider too,

5. The blessing such a family proves to the commonwealth and the church. Children so trained give no trouble to the laws or the magistrate; they are a law unto themselves. By their example, they exert an influence, favorable to order and peace, to industry, integrity and benevolence. They are a blessing to the church. It is to families trained up by daily devotion and early religious instruction, that we look to find those who shall make and adorn a profession of religion. In such, religion is a thing of early, gentle, constant growth; and appears in *principles* and *habits*, more than in flashes of passion, in excited feelings, soon

warm, soon cool, which is the case with many, who are at times wrought upon, without previous knowledge or principles fixed in the mind. If then, beloved parents, you desire the welfare of the community, and the growth and honor of the church of Christ, and the spread and increase of that religion, which appears in holy principles and holy habits, rather than in flights of passion, in glaring exercises for a season, and then a falling away, train your families by the daily practice of family prayer and parental instruction.

But I have not time farther to enlarge on this interesting subject. In closing, permit me to hope that the parents of this assembly are disposed to see, that the resolution of Joshua is proper for every parent in a christian land, and that you will severally say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." O let your grateful hands be employed in building your family altar. Let not the sun of this holy sabbath go down without your fixed purpose to worship God in your families, if in any of your cases it has been neglected. Draw around you the souls committed to your charge and commend them to God; and instruct them diligently. Indulge not the thought that you shall be singular, or that you have not abilities for the task, nor any other plea so prone to check and destroy a good resolution.

Parents and teachers, the young are the hope of the flock; let us render to them an attention from the pulpit, at home, in the public schools, and in the sabbath school, which, crowned with the divine blessing, may cause these immortal plants "to spring up as among

the grass, as willows by the water-courses." Then soon, "one shall say, I am the Lord's ; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

So may God grant, through Jesus Christ, the great shepherd, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

# SERMON X.

## MORAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

PROVERBS iv. 1, 2.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

There is scarcely any subject, on which a minister can address his people of more eventful importance, than that of the moral and religious education of the young; and this is the reason why I address you more frequently on this topic, than any other.—Those of us, who have children, need to have our minds frequently incited to the important duty we owe to them. The most diligent and faithful parent too often relaxes his watchfulness, and slumbers over his task; and while he sleeps, the enemy comes and sows tares in his field. The exhortation in the text is addressed to children—Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.—But the obligation of children, presupposes the advan-

tage of careful instruction. The exhortation to children, therefore, implies the duty of parents.

For several years I have preached on the subject of religious education, just as we were about to open the Sabbath School, that great and important means of improving the young, which all over the christian world is producing such happy results. The success of the Sabbath School depends mainly on the co-operation of parents. It is not, therefore, a substitute for parental instruction, but an auxiliary; it is not to relax their exertions, but to aid and encourage them, that it has been instituted and sustained. In two important re-respects let parents afford their co-operation with the Sabbath School, this day to be opened—First, in securing the attendance of their children—and, secondly, in explaining to them the practical end of all their sabbath lessons; that they are not words merely to be engraven on the memory, but instructions in what they must believe and do, in order to be happy. If parents will, to the best of their ability, do this, great will be their reward.

But I pass to the particular object of this discourse; which is, to suggest a few important things, which should be kept constantly in the mind of the parent, in conducting his children from early childhood, to that time of life in which they must be resigned to the conduct of themselves; a period of life perhaps the most important of all, as then the dispositions of the mind take their direction and bias, and the habits fix their root. I shall not pretend to mention in one discourse,

everything which is important; but urge the careful inculcation, in childhood and youth, of the following few dispositions and habits, as tending, with the blessing of God, to the moral perfection of character. I mean the disposition and habits of modesty, of purity, and sincerity of speech—diligence, compassion, and pity—piety and devotion.

Let us consider the vast importance of each. And

1. Of modesty. This is a disposition thought to be natural to children; and that parents have little more to do, than carefully to preserve it. But what is modesty? I may define it to be a fear of shame or disgrace. If it be not properly a virtue, it is a great preservative from vice. Those children are generally regarded most promising, who have the quickest sense of shame after the commission of wrong. There is but little hope of a child who has worn out this disposition, and who not only conducts himself indecently and wickedly, but is willing and proud to have it known. Parents, therefore, cannot with too much care and watchfulness preserve this temper in their children. To do this requires judgment and delicacy. It is not by crying shame to the child upon the commission of a little fault; the child may not be able to see any indecency in the behaviour reprehended; and may be hardened by a disproportioned rebuke. Of small faults, a gentle notice only should be taken, and rebuke should be reserved for something alarming and palpable, in order to preserve modesty, or the sensibility to shame.

This lovely disposition, carefully preserved, will greatly assist the parent in preserving in his children,

2. Purity and sincerity of speech. By purity of speech, I would be understood to mean a freedom from unchaste and profane words. How corrupt must be the fountain which can send forth such streams! It surely cannot be necessary to exhort parents to use extreme caution to preserve their children from words and expressions, which must disgust every person of delicacy, and shock every person of pious feeling. Indecent language in childhood is a mark of great coarseness of mind, and almost a certain omen of profligacy in after life. Childhood is the age of modesty, and proper care in precept and example, would purify the language of the young. A parent, who has a modest child, to preserve him such, must withhold him as much as possible from the sight and hearing of all such rude companions, as glory in their shame. A familiarity with them will soon check the rising blush of delicacy, till it shall cease to rise: and modesty in the child shall be converted into that shamefulness, which in youth, must be expected to appear in a very criminal and disgusting form.

Children should be kept from companions indecent in their language, because such are commonly profane also. When persons have ceased to regard man, it is no wonder if they have also escaped from the fear of God. The habit of profaneness is acquired wholly from example. It cannot, I think, be otherwise. For there is no temptation to this impious vice from any

passion or appetite within. This being the case, how careful should parents be to preserve their children from the dreadful influence of such examples!

Let me now remark farther, that parents should inculcate not only purity of speech, but also sincerity and truth. They cannot too easily prepossess the young mind with the conviction of the baseness of a lie. On all occasions, when a child is tempted to utter a falsehood through fear of shame or correction, he should be encouraged to frankness and sincerity. There is so much virtue in sincerity, that on many such occasions it should procure the forgiveness of the fault, which the child disdained to conceal by a falsehood. If this ingenuous disposition is not encouraged; if honest confession is always followed by chastisement, instead of a gentle rebuke and forgiveness, the child will be strongly tempted to resort to deceit and falsehood to screen himself from punishment. It is most important to be remembered, that if a parent would have his children sincere, he must give them an invariable example of truth in speaking; he must never, on great occasions, or on small, in jest, or in earnest, deceive them. One example of falsehood in the parent will cleave to their memories with a fatal influence. If their own example be religiously correct in this respect, it will give weight to their precepts on the subject, which should be frequent and solemn. Some heathen nations have numbered prevarication and breach of faith among the most odious of crimes, and cannot the rules of christianity be rendered as effectual in this respect as

the light of nature or the lessons of experience? But I proceed,

3. To mention another virtue, which parents should encourage in their children, as a capital safeguard against almost all the follies of childhood; I mean employment, diligent employment. They should be always engaged in some useful, at least innocent occupation. For "those who are permitted to be idle, are put upon a kind of necessity of being vicious for want of something better to do." It has been observed of idleness,* that it is the bane of children; it is the unbending of their spirits, the rust of their faculties, and as it were the leaving of their minds unprepared and vacant; not as husbandmen do their lands, that they may acquire new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they possess. Children that are bred up in idleness, are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, because they have never been accustomed to it. Nothing valuable in property, knowledge, or religion can be gained without exertion. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich, while the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." What is thus true of outward wealth, is not less true of vital religion; it can neither be acquired, nor maintained, nor enjoyed without activity and diligence. The virtues of the Christian soon languish, and his graces lose their lustre, unless sustained with labour and vigilance. The untrimmed lamp soon grows dim. It is a serious fact, of which too few are duly sensible, that there can be

* Tillotson.

neither excellence, nor happiness, without a disposition to be employed, and the habit of diligence. We are made to be happy in action, not in indolence. It is true, that the happiness of the blessed is sometimes in scripture represented by the term rest. But what is the nature of that rest? Certainly not a state of stupor; for of this the soul is incapable, being in its very nature most active, and never more at rest, than when it is intently engaged in the most agreeable course of action. These remarks are sufficient to show, how defective is that character, in which well-directed diligence is wanting; and how essentially defective is that plan of educating children, in which they are not allured to diligence in the earliest stages of life. The advantages of this virtue are many and obvious. It is a security from almost every kind of temptation, and is a means of almost every excellence. While idleness not only clothes a man with rags, but ministers to him constant opportunity and temptation to folly and sin. It is important for me to remark,

4. That parents should cultivate in their children a tenderness of disposition, an aptness to pity and compassion. Such a disposition, prudently fostered in childhood, till it becomes a habit, will prove of excellent use in later life to preserve from injustice and oppression, and every species of unkindness. A disposition of this amiable nature will be a constant prompter to deeds of mercy. Now the disposition of a child is early influenced and fixed, and circumstances often overlooked or thought unimportant, stamp the temper for life as

cruel and unmerciful, or kind and compassionate.—Spectacles of cruelty have great effect. That nation, whose name has become a proverb for cruelty, delights in savage and bloody sports. Children should be discountenanced in every kind of barbarous usage of animals in their power. If they are allowed to be cruel to animals, great or small, it will so harden the heart, that they will be prepared to inflict similar sufferings, if they dare, on their fellow-creatures; at least they will be little disposed to the most ordinary duties of compassion to the poor and miserable. Let me observe farther, to show the importance of this disposition, that it is the very spirit which breathes throughout the Gospel; the sweet temper which it labors to form in the hearts of Christians. "Be kind one to another, tender hearted," saith the Apostle, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." The disposition, so often inculcated by precept, was most beautifully enforced by the example of Christ. His life was a continual exhibition of this most amiable temper. Friends, strangers, enemies, shared in the fruits of it. When he made his last entry into Jerusalem, that city, which had murdered the prophets, and stoned them who were sent unto her, and were just ready to fill up the measure of their iniquities by his crucifixion, "when we was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." He seemed to lose sight of their wickedness in commiseration of their coming sufferings. A disposition which appears so amia-

ble, which is so full of good fruits, which makes so essential a part of true religion, and assimilates us to God himself, cannot with too much care and solicitude be fostered in children, and confirmed into habit. Let them commit to memory passages of scripture, which show the nature and importance of it—as, "He shall have judgment without mercy who hath showed no mercy." Let the sentiment of the 25th of Matthew be kept fresh in their minds, as the most effectual excitement to the disposition and deeds of charity. For there our final Judge reveals the rule, by which he will try men in the great day, assuring us, that accordingly as this disposition shall be found to have been exercised or neglected, and his brethren, by whom he means the afflicted, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, have been relieved and comforted, or neglected, so shall men receive a welcome into his joy, or banishment into outer darkness, where is weeping and wailing forever.

In addition to the dispositions and habits already insisted upon, I mention further,

5. The disposition and habit of christian piety in all its branches, as essential to be blended with the character of children. To form and cherish this in their children, parents must be always anxious and devoted. The simple principles of the gospel must be instilled into their minds in their infant state. As soon as possible, they must be instructed to believe, that they are always in the presence, and under the eye of a great and holy Being, who loves the good, and is displeased with

the bad. And that they may love as well as fear him, they should be often told, that his unseen hand bestows all their comforts, protects, and feeds, and clothes them, and that he gave his son to die for them. These are great, but very simple truths. Children can receive them among the first ideas of reflection; and their tender minds will not fail to be greatly affected by them. If impressions of this kind can be made on their minds, it will then be easy to show their duty to such a Benefactor. "Is he so great a Being, the parent may say, and does he continually look upon you and observe you? how careful then should you be to fear and honor him. Do you receive from him every thing which you enjoy? Then every day you should thank him for his mercies. Do you depend upon him for every thing you hope in this world or the next? Ask and you shall receive; for he giveth liberally and upbraideth not.—Pray to God, and he will grant you all the reasonable desires of your hearts. Pray to him, and if he should not make you so rich as some, he will make you good and happy, which is more than riches can do." In simple conversations of this kind with little children, the principles of piety, with the divine blessing, may be early instilled, and habits of devotion early fixed. The thoughts and expressions can scarcely be too simple. Milk is for babes. And while they are taught the duty of private devotion, they should have a daily example of it in the family, and be taught to attend constantly upon public worship, and to keep their minds intently engaged in every part of it. If children be thus in-

fluenced to piety and devotion by precept and example, there is every probability, with the blessing of God, that, being thus trained in the way in which they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it.

Thus have I endeavored to excite a solicitude in parents to inculcate upon children, and to form in them the dispositions and habits of modesty, of pure and sincere speech, of diligence, of compassion and pity, of piety and devotion. And the scriptures give the greatest encouragement to hope, that if these be wrought into the minds and tempers of children, they will grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength through life; and not only so, but will naturally branch out into all the christian graces and virtues. The possibility of a failure should not damp, but increase the ardor of the anxious parent.

In closing this discourse, let me say to parents, that there is no subject on which I could address them, which more deeply concerns the interests of religion and society, than that of the moral and religious education of their children. The dearest interests of their children in both worlds are involved in it. The neglect of this duty, on their part, almost ensures their children to become vicious and miserable. I would hope there are none, who neglect this duty altogether. I fear there are few, who render to it the attention its unspeakable importance demands. Shall I not say, that this education of your children, by your personal attention, is not to be considered as a work for leisure time, that it should not be deferred for a day. It must not

give place to any other business, for nothing is so important. To this greatest and noblest work, then, let me exhort parents to devote themselves. You are willing to compass sea and land to provide a subsistence and inheritance for them, and this zeal for them is amiable—but those things are perishable. A far greater service will you do them, by inculcating, with ceaseless solicitude and care, the dispositions and habits mentioned in this discourse. If you succeed, these will be to them an imperishable inheritance, and the joy of your hearts while you live. There is no greater joy than to see children walking in the truth. The task before you is plain, but cannot be discharged without patient exertion. The object is great, and is worth all your care. Instruct them in familiar dialogues; teach them the principles, and form them to the practice of the gospel. If you feel unequal to do this in language of your own, helps are at hand for you. Impressing on the minds of your children these truths and duties, you will revive and deepen the same on your own. Let me entreat every parent of my charge, to engage with zeal in this great duty. And particularly at this time, when the sabbath school will afford you its important aid. Two things parents can do of the utmost importance to their children; to see that they attend the sabbath school; and at home to see that they carefully and correctly commit to memory their sacred lessons. For several seasons, great has been the success of this interesting school, therefore, great is the benefit of it. This benefit let not one child, or youth

fail to enjoy, nor one parent withhold his personal attention to secure it to his children.

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If parents are not wanting in resolution to send their children, and in care to assist them at home, we may indulge the hope to see, through the blessing of God, the rising generation enlightened, virtuous, and pious. And let me add, that parents may the more confidently hope that this will be the case, if to their care and instruction they add the influence of a spotless example. Without this, indeed, other means will have but little effect. "For even children, as a wise observer of human nature remarks, have so much sense and sagacity as to understand, that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly believe. With what reason, continues he, canst thou expect that thy children should follow thy good instructions, when thou thyself givest them an ill example. Thou dost but, as it were, beckon with thy head and show them the way to heaven by thy good counsel; but thou takest them by the hand and leadest them in the way to ruin by thy example. You weaken the authority of your commands, and lose all reverence and obedience by contradicting your own precepts."

But I must hasten abruptly to a conclusion of this important subject. May God in infinite mercy grant to every parent grace, wisdom, and patience to do his duty to his children, and the happiest fruits of having done it, in seeing them walking according to the truth. Amen.

# SERMON XI.

## TO THE AGED.

PSALM, xcii. 14.

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.

In these words, the psalmist is speaking of the righteous. In the preceding verses, he describes their flourishing condition, and its cause. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those, that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." It is added in the text—"They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." They, who are such constant visitants in the sanctuary, as to be almost said to be *planted* there, shall derive from the spiritual nourishment, there received, such vigor as to be fruitful in the most unpropitious season of life. Such is the current meaning of the text. My object, in selecting the passage at this time, is to notice some of those precious fruits, which should charac-

terize the season, whenever more favorable opportunities of religious cultivation are past—those spiritual graces which are the ornament and comfort of old age. I often address the *youthful* part of this assembly, persuaded that the preacher has an advantage in the tenderness of that season, which is often lost in maturer life. Yet every class and age are entitled to special attention, and at suitable seasons to have those instructions presented, which are appropriate to them.

I shall this morning address the aged, who form a very interesting class of this society. Their nearness to another world; the certainty that they will not long enjoy the means of grace; their very infirmities; and the visible tokens of approaching change, interest and affect the speaker. The recent death of one of their number, I hope, will aid him in what he is to say; and happy will he be, should he be able to contribute any thing towards preparing them for a safe and comfortable termination of life. It is usual to speak of the aged as venerable; and we can scarcely meet an aged stranger but we hasten to do him reverence. We listen to his conversation, expecting to find that "days shall speak, and the multitude of years shall give knowledge." If we perceive something of the fire and sparkling of the mind to be gone, we expect that which is better, the maxims of ripest prudence, resulting from long experience. We think little of the maxims flowing from youthful reflection, compared with those, which an aged man has established in his mind by multiplied facts and experiments. We gather around the bed of

an aged friend, on the verge of life, expecting and often receiving the most salutary counsels and impressive exhortations. I observed, that the very form of age is venerable, when seen in a stranger; in one, of whose real character we are not informed. Now what excites this reverence? Is it not the opinion we entertain of the greater sanctity of the aged? In so long a life, we think they must have seen the emptiness of the world, and the madness of sin; that they of all men must be in earnest, seeking a better country, even a heavenly; and that they are forming themselves to that degree of purity and excellence, which becomes the country which they desire; that their passions are cooled by age, and that they look back upon the thoughtless cares of younger days, with surprise and shame; that they not only perceive the things which are more excellent, but pursue them, and like pilgrims at the close of their journey, are engrossed by the thought, how they shall secure an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord. Such seem to be the reasons for our veneration for the aged —our opinion of their greater sanctity, and abstractedness from the world. If, upon a nearer view, and more exact knowledge, this opinion be found unsupported— and the aged appear as worldly, as sensual, as sinful as others, our veneration is changed into painful disappointment, and a humiliating pity. So true are the words of the wise man—"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

Let us proceed to consider that good fruit which the righteous shall still bring forth in old age.

The great duties of life are indeed always the same, and obligatory on all ages and characters of men. The term religion stands to express the appropriate conduct of man in all his relations to God and men; in a word, universal holiness of heart and life. The duties, peculiar to the aged, arise more out of the circumstances of their character and condition, than from any change in the principle of religion. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This expression implies that the fruit is substantially the same, with that brought forth in earlier seasons.

In giving some account of this spiritual good fruit, then, I shall take occasion to mention some of the leading virtues and habits of a christian life.

I. The first, that I shall mention, on account of its radical importance, is faith. This, in the aged, should be clear and decided. There must be in them an unshaken faith in the holy scriptures; for it is not now with them a time for speculation; a time to seek a new religion; or to halt between two opinions; to be perplexed with doubts; or to believe faintly and inefficiently. And as they long since received the bible as a divine book, so also they should have become familiar with its contents, and settled in mind as to its leading truths and doctrines, that they may not hesitate what to believe, and whom to obey. If unsettled in faith, the aged is like the waves of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed. If long accustomed to doubt and uncertainty, he will find it almost impossible to arrive at any conclusion on the great subjects of human duty, or the

foundation of hope and fear. His views should be fixed with respect to the future world, for he is now approaching its frontier. He must not now be sceptical, whether his way is soon to break into the dreadful gulf of annihilation, or lead into regions awfully and eternally interesting. If thus sceptical, what indecision must there be at every step, what tumult in his feelings, and what disorder in his conduct! There must be much of the heart in his faith. He must, therefore, not only receive the gospel as true, but entertain its great truths in a sincere and effectual manner. He must clearly believe in the salvation revealed to us through faith, before he will consistently seek it; and in the reality of future rewards, and punishments for the righteous and the wicked, before he will, with proper solicitude, seek the one, and shun the other. Such is the faith which should live in the breast of the aged—an enlightened, affectionate, practical principle, displaying itself in an entire christian character. Among the good fruits brought forth in old age, I remark,

II. There should be repentance.

Such is man on earth, that repentance is his duty all his days. If, in early life, the mind may have been affected with penitence for past sin or insensibility, this repentance is not sufficient, unless it be habitual. The sentiment once awakened would be sufficient if life were a course of sinless security. But who can pretend to this? The best sin daily, and have fresh occasion for the tears of repentance, and the mercy of renewed forgiveness. Nor, where sins of gross sensuality are not committed—nor

violence of anger or passion indulged, nor general duties of devotion and benevolence neglected, may the occasion of frequent repentance be wanting. The particular sins, to which men are prone, will often usurp their power. The hectic of passion sometimes reddens the wrinkled cheek of age. The selfish principle, which is opposed to that charity which seeketh not her own, lives into old age, and, in many, shoots its root still deeper in that season of life, and makes work for repentance. And in regard to piety, if there be a constant attendance, in form, on the duties of secret and social prayer, have they no occasion to lament that the heart is often cold or absent? There are none so habitual and happy in religious affections, as not to have occasion for humiliation and repentant sorrow. Thus it must appear, that the aged, and all of us, should live repenting, and die repenting. It is a grace, which can never, in this world, be out of season. And when we see this amiable and venerable tenderness of conscience, this backwardness to offend, and readiness to confess and lament every day's offences, which are the true signs of that habitual repentance, of which I am speaking, then we see something of that glory which crowns a hoary head; something of that ripening fruit, which betokens a joyful harvest near. Among the sweet fruits brought forth in old age, I now proceed to mention,

III. Christian hope.

This heavenly grace is then greatly needed by the aged. With them the shadows are lengthened; and those earthly lights, the sun, and the moon, and the stars,

begin to be darkened. And O! how cheering, then, is the influence of the star of Bethlehem! how strong the consolation, when they have fled for refuge to the hope set before them—the hope "which is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil." A hope like this, springs from faith and repentance; and all hope not built on this foundation, cheers but to delude. To the aged, how very precious must be this hope. They have little to hope for from this world; their companions are mostly gone; their outward comforts diminished; the most solemn and eventful scenes are near. But if they have a well-grounded hope beyond the grave, they are neither dejected nor dismayed. No region is dark, where this heavenly day-star shines; often has it turned the shadow of death into the light of day. This sweet and pure affection should be strong in the aged; they should be full of the thoughts and longings of immortality. On the wings of hope they should soar away from earth, with a becoming indifference to its objects. This freedom from the world, always becoming the Christian, peculiarly becomes the aged. Their relation to all things below must soon be dissolved; hope reconciles them to the event; and prepares them to leave the world without regret. There will be, then,

IV. A diminished regard for the world and its objects. When by faith it has discovered a better country and the way to it, and by repentance has sought it, and by hope apprehends a bright inheritance in it, it would be strange, if the soul did not perceive the emptiness of its

earthly habitation, and the vanity of earthly possessions. It would be strange, if it did not place its affections on things above, and take great delight in meditation upon them, in actual enjoyment of them by anticipation. This disposition certainly becomes the aged in a particular manner. In mid-life they may have had others dependent upon them, whose support and welfare were the objects of pressing cares; but their children have now left them, to form other connexions in life, or remain with them to repay their early kindness by affectionately supplying their wants, and respectfully relieving, as far as possible, the infirmities incident to old age. They need not take an anxious thought for to-morrow. Even if, through misfortunes, they have not a competency for the support of their declining years, and there is no filial hand to supply it, there are many ready to shew kindness to the aged in their necessity. The day of labor is over. It is now evening; and they should think only how they may, in a peaceful and christian manner, retire to the bed of death.

It is a painful spectacle to see an old man eagerly clinging to the world; still laboring with exhausted strength to gather in superfluous stores, which he cannot enjoy, and may leave only to corrupt his heirs; bending his eyes and soul downward to a spot which can neither reward nor retain him, when he should be pluming himself for a flight into the skies. But on the other hand, if we see an old man in a right frame of mind, and duly occupied—and such I have seen—mixing with the world, more as an avocation, than a business; the

bible often in his hand, as giving the best account of that world, where his thoughts and wishes dwell; often retiring to his closet, and returning, as from a place of holy delight; fervent in his family devotion; cheerful, solemn, and heavenly in his conversation; we look upon such a man with affectionate veneration, and could, perhaps, be willing to change the bloom of youth for his hoary hairs. But let me more particularly say,

V. That devotion is among the sweet, spiritual fruits, which the righteous "bring forth in old age."—Habitual, fervent devotion will be very natural to a mind, which has arrived at a low esteem of this world and its objects. When the soul lets go its hold on these things, it reaches with all its power after something better; for it must be active, and always must have an object, which it affectionately desires. Such a disposition surely becomes the aged. They are receding from the world; they bid farewell to one object and friend after another, and will soon leave the whole at once. They should then aspire to connexions not mortal, not dissoluble.—This is to be done by devotion. Prayer is holy converse with the Deity; an humble aspiring after communion with him, and interest in his friendly regards. The moment is just at hand, when they will need his powerful friendship—all other will fail utterly—and whither will they plunge, if not upheld by his omnipotent arm? But prayer, the prayer of faith, prayer habitual and sincere, will give them firm hold of this immoveable Rock, and render it needless to fear even the billows of death.

I shall mention but one thing more among the precious fruits which the righteous bear in old age,

VI. Readiness to die; by which I mean both a preparation and willingness to meet death. And surely, if any, the aged should be prepared to die. Comparatively with others, they have had a long time in which to prepare. Many others they have seen early cut down, and many suddenly, having had but a few calls to faith and repentance, to hope and heavenly mindedness. They have had many, and all the variety of means to aid their preparation. They should be prepared, as their opportunity is almost exhausted—and soon "he that is holy, will be holy still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still." The aged, also, should be willing to die, chiefly because it is the will of God; and because, too, the world has become empty to them. For the desires, which an old man sends out into the world are like the dove, sent out on weary wing over the world of watery desolation—they cannot find whereon to light, and of necessity must return again into his own bosom.

Thus having shown some of those spiritual fruits, which the righteous bring forth in old age—that they have a mind firmly established by faith, and reformed by repentance, and enlightened by hope, and a heart with diminished regard esteeming the world and its objects, loving devotion, and in a state of readiness for death, we cannot fail to see that such persons, amidst all the infirmities of declining years, are truly venerable—and that they seem as beings belonging to a ho-

lier world, rather than our own. Behold such an one, his loins girded, his lamp trimmed and burning, with a smile of peace, expecting his summons.—Such an one was Paul the aged, when he first wrote to his own son in the faith—"The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Who would not exchange youthful vigor for the infirmities of such an old age; and the best prospects in this word, for the glorious hopes of its expiring hour? Let me say to the younger part of this assembly, that if we would bear such fruit in old age, we must be diligent to plant the seed early. Nature teaches us, that seed sown late in the season, winter being just at hand, can produce none but a blighted harvest. It is worth a life of religious care and toil, to bring forth fruit in old age. But I shall close with a few hints to the aged.

In our subject, you perceive, my aged friends, what manner of persons you ought to be, "in all holy conversation and godliness." The virtues and habits, which have been mentioned, are all necessary to complete your character. And, in the nature of the thing, they go together, and grow out of each other. Faith leads to repentance, and repentance to hope. Hope of heaven induces a comparative disregard of the world; and again produces a devout spirit, and heavenly mindedness; and these show a preparedness for death. Let

me respectfully and affectionately ask you, Do you find these blessed fruits to be the ornament and comfort of your old age? Examine, I beseech you, and see. Would to God you may not any of you find yourselves defective or weak in any of these connected and essential graces. Like the limbs of the body, they have a vital connexion; if one be absent, the rest languish, and probably die.—You will permit me to remark, that in the aged should be found the highest degrees of christian character; and will not the final Judge expect to find them? For you have had a long life of privileges, and have been long in the finer's fire, and should now appear as silver "seven times purified." What evenness of temper, and benevolence of disposition to all around you, should now appear! No sufferings, to which you may be called for the trial of your faith, should be allowed to provoke complaint or an impatient feeling, or strike from you a spark of anger. Your gentle manners should win the reverence, and be the example of all around you. In the personal virtues you should excel. You have lived too long not to have seen the fatal effects of intemperance, and a neglect of self government. Avarice has been thought the peculiar vice of age. It is strange, if it is. Why should they covet what they cannot hold; and grow more than ever attached to what they are on the point of leaving? If it be the vice of age, guard against it. Remember that one essential virtue in the crown of the hoary head, is a diminished esteem of the world, and of its objects.

Let me earnestly exhort you to improve your time

to the benefit of others. The exhortation of the Apostle is peculiarly suited to you—"Let your conversation be always with grace." One word of profaneness or of levity grossly misbecomes your age. What! shall those lips be opened with an oath, which shall soon be sealed in death? Rather let your speech be like that of aged Moses—"My doctrine," says he, "shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." In a word, your whole deportment should be more heavenly than earthly. The language, the affections, the devout employments of the blessed in heaven, should be yours. Keep the blessed gospels open before you continually, those precious mirrors, which reflect the image of Jesus, to which you must be conformed. Let him, in all his offices, be precious to you, as he will, if you believe; and desire nothing so much as at last to sleep in Jesus, and obtain a part in the first resurrection. And now, my aged friends, possibly it is the last time I may address you all. God grant that you may bear much and precious fruit in old age; and be gathered in, as a shock of corn, which is ripe unto the harvest. Farewell. I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified. Amen.

# SERMON XII.

## TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH.

II. KINGS ii. 11, 12.

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them into pieces.

The event related in these words is one of the most memorable and important in the Old Testament history; and was doubtless to answer highly important purposes. It has pleased God, not only to give intimations of a future state in the early ages of the world, but a sort of demonstration and exemplification of it, once in the patriarchal age by the translation of Enoch, and again in the period of the Levitical church, by the translation of Elijah. So in the brighter day of the gospel, when the doctrine of immortality and the re-

surrection of the body were distinctly taught, this same species of demonstration was given, and that in a more glorious manner, and to many witnesses, in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, in his appearance to his disciples, his conversations with them, and ultimate instructions to them during forty days, and then in his visible ascension into heaven, a cloud of glory receiving him out of their sight. This practical connexion of earth with heaven, this visible transition of human beings from the one to the other, is interesting in the highest degree to mortals, and convincing too, as the apostle confidently concludes—"As Jesus died and rose again, even so them, who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

We have a very interesting, and, I pray God, it may prove an edifying subject in the passage of sacred history before us. The conduct of Elisha on the occasion answered to the extraordinary nature of it. He said little, and what he uttered was in short and broken sentences. His emotions were evidently unutterable—"My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Let us consider this passionate exclamation of the prophet, in connexion with the concise history of this memorable event, and conceive, if we can, the impressive considerations which called it forth.

As the prophet was the favored spectator of all the circumstances of Elijah's ascension, and also was forewarned of the event, it may be supposed that he exclaimed,

1. From an exulting persuasion of the immortal and blessed state, to which he was rising.

Although life and immortality, in a manner the most incontestable, were brought to light by Jesus Christ, in the gospel, it seems strange that any should have embraced the opinion that the scriptures of the Old Testament supply no substantial testimonies of the future state. Waving to mention texts, obvious to all who are familiar with the Bible, I may venture to rest the point on the translation of Enoch and Elijah. This distinction of those two men from all others, cannot have been designed merely as the reward of their faith and piety. Why then did it please God to translate them, "that they should not see death," as the writer of the Hebrews mentions? May we not confidently say, to give assurance of a future state? I believe it will be readily conceded, that in no other way could the important truth be so convincingly taught. Enoch's translation is related in few words. It is probable, however, that they were witnesses of it, and that it was the subject of much remark at the time, as the faith of the event was preserved in the world by tradition, and the record of Moses. This signal event was a merciful appointment of God at that particular time. The fruits of the first transgression had been manifested by death, and the early world was overspread with increasing guilt. Something seemed necessary to revive the drooping spirits of the righteous, and to encourage them to stem the rising torrent of corruption. No method could be so efficient, to call their attention to a future world of retri-

bution. We learn from Jude, that Enoch first prophesied that "God would come to judgment with ten thousand of his saints." As a practical explanation and enforcement of that doctrine, to show, that the judgment predicted had respect, not to the present state only, but to a future also, and in reward of his excellent character, "he was translated that he should not see death." Thus it pleased God early to give mankind demonstrative proof of a future state, and to afford this testimony of his favor to all them "that walk with him."

Of the translation of Elijah, enough is related to be the ground of faith in the event, although the account may be too concise to gratify curiosity. From the narrative we learn, that the event was expected, not only by Elijah but also by Elisha, and by the sons of the prophets in the two schools at Bethel and Jericho.—This can no otherwise be accounted for, than by the supposition that it was revealed. Elisha, apprized that he was soon to be separated from his venerable instructer, closely attended his steps. The elder prophet requested him to remain at Gilgal, and again at Bethel and Jericho, perhaps to try his resolution; perhaps, because he thought, that the august scene of his translation might be too awful and terrifying to his son and successor; at least, that it might be best, that he should behold it with the sons of the prophets from a distant eminence. Perhaps his repeated request was a trial of his affection; and may be regarded as a permission to remain behind, and so avoid the display of terrific glory, which might prove overwhelming and perilous to a

mortal. Whatever were his motives, Elisha's steady and solemn reply was—"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

Behold those venerable men repairing to the spot from which Elijah was to ascend. They come to Jordan, and the waters, smitten by the prophet's mantle, were divided hither and thither, and they pass over on dry ground. The moment of separation draws near. The elder prophet is not so engrossed by the thoughts of the scene and untried world before him, as to forget the affection and wants of the younger. "Ask," said he, "what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," replied Elisha. "I ask no inferior things —not 'the barrel of meal which wasteth not, nor the cruse of oil which shall not fail.' Let me be like thee, a man of exalted faith and virtue, of a temper and spirit ripened for glory, a prophet mighty in word and deed."

Such was the conversation of the prophets, when, behold, "there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire"—a bright resplendent cloud, thrown into the form of a chariot, and horses borne up by angels or by the power of the Omnipotent. This glorious cloud parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw it and exclaimed, My father, my father! Is it not reasonable to suppose, that while he saw this holy man encircled with supernatural glory, and ascending majestically into heaven, he exulted in this new demonstration of a future state, and of a better

country, even a heavenly, the abode and recompense of the friends of God? Whether in the surprise of the moment, he made this rejoicing reflection, we know not. That Elisha had the conviction that there was such a state, and that Elijah was removed to it, I think the context forbids us to doubt. It appears highly probable from the narrative, that fifty men of the sons of the prophets were distant spectators of Elijah's ascension. They believed the fact of his elevation from the earth; yet supposed that he might have been placed again on some mountain or in some valley, and urged the prophet that fifty men might be sent to search for him. Elisha at first refused, but at length, not for his satisfaction but theirs, he consented. From his reply to them on their return from a fruitless search, we may conclude, that they were all satisfied of the real nature of Elijah's ascension. Thus did God, a second time, demonstrate to the world a future state in a manner the most convincing and impressive.

I proceed to remark,

2. That a sense of his personal loss by the removal of Elijah, may have had its weight in the mind of the prophet, when he exclaimed, "My father, my father." Opposite passions sometimes struggle at the same instant in the breast, joy and sorrow; and this may have been the case with Elisha; joy for the honor done his master, and sorrow for the loss of his society, instruction and example. With what delight had he hung upon his lips, while he taught in the school of the prophets! With what delight and wonder had he listened,

while this great reformer denounced the judgments of heaven on the idolatrous nation, reproving kings, and contending against false prophets, sustained as they were by an infuriated queen. Such was that Elijah from whom he is now parted, and whose mantle, and awful authority, and arduous office were devolved upon himself, unequal as he felt to sustain them. Well then might he exclaim, with the keenest sense of his loss, My father, my father. But,

3. It is probable, a sense of his own loss was less painful to the generous and pious mind of the prophet, than concern for his country and religion, bereft of a friend so powerful with God and men. This was the grief which pierced his soul. He exclaimed, he wept for his country; he trembled for religion.—This is fully evident from the clause.—" the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." This bold and figurative expression will not appear too strong, if we turn to the history of those times, and observe the influence Elijah had over the nation. He was a man raised up by Providence at an awful crisis, and divinely furnished to answer great purposes. Forty years before this time, Jeroboam had corrupted religion to political purposes. Perceiving he could not hold the ten tribes together in their rebellion, if they should continue their religious assemblies at Jerusalem, he set up the calves in Dan and Bethel, and called them to worship there, saying, " It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." This impious policy was continued by his successors, till Ahab came, " who did evil in the sight of the Lord

above all that were before him." From worshipping the true God by images, which seems to have been the sin of Jeroboam, Ahab proceeded to erect a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria. Wedded to a pagan bigot, and startling at no degree of impiety, he obtained the character that there was none like Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

It was at this gloomy moment, that Elijah appeared an intrepid reformer. He began his work in the palace, denouncing to the face of the king the judgments of heaven. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Happy would it have been, if Ahab had, like the king of Nineveh, turned at this divine warning. But it rather hardened him the more; and he was only anxious to wreak his vengeance on the prophet's head. In the mean time the man of God is fed by ravens; and again receives the hospitality of the widow of Zarephath, rewarding her with the barrel of meal which wasted not, and the cruse of oil which did not fail, and by restoring her dead son to life.

It seems probable, that the judgments of heaven had some influence upon the people, if not upon the king. For the prophet was directed to make a public experiment of the national will regarding religion, whether they would cleave to Baal, or return to Jehovah. With this view he boldly presented himself before Ahab. The king had sought him three years in every corner

of his dominions and in adjacent countries. But now the prophet's message to Obadiah is—"Go tell thy lord, behold Elijah is here—As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will show myself to him to-day." They meet, the haughty monarch and the hated prophet. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" saith Ahab. "I have not troubled Israel," replies Elijah, "but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalam."

He then demands of the king, to assemble all his false prophets or priests of Baal, on the top of Carmel, in the sight of all Israel, that he might meet them.—Ahab complied, probably esteeming it a good opportunity of putting his enemy to death. What an interesting scene! On the one hand, you see eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal, supported by the king, and countenanced, at least generally, by the people. On the other, without a human friend that dares support him, stands Elijah. He is not alone, however, nor unprotected; for God is with him. Undaunted, he cries aloud to the people, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The trial, by sacrifice, which followed, is familiar to my hearers. The visible power of God was seen and acknowledged. The people fell on their faces, and cried with enthusiastic joy—"The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God." In the enthusiasm of the moment, the false prophets were slain, and the famished people saw the heavens once more blackening with clouds to relieve the parched earth; and so

abundant was the rain, that the king was scarcely able to reach the city. Thus was Elijah, unsupported by an earthly friend, the honored instrument of a religious revolution in Israel. The influence of it upon the national safety and happiness was soon perceived. The insolent king of Syria, assisted by thirty-two auxiliary kings, besieged Samaria, but was routed by Ahab with immense slaughter, as the prophet had predicted. At the return of the year, the baffled king strengthened himself to the utmost, and repeated the invasion. The Syrians fill the country, while the children of Israel pitch before them, in comparatively insignificant array. But the battle is the Lord's; the rout of the Syrians was total; and the proud Benhadad, humbled and degraded, sued for his life.

I have given this short connected view of events, to show of what importance Elijah was to the nation, and the propriety of the character given of him by Elisha, in his broken exclamation—"the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Elisha had a deep conviction, obtained perhaps from the predictions of Moses, and the history of the nation, that religion was always the defence of the nation, and apostacy and idolatry its ruin. While then he beheld the great reformer, given in the darkest times, taken up into heaven before his work seemed completed, it was with concern for his country, that he exclaimed, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Let us now close the view we have taken of this in-

teresting passage of the sacred history, with a few practical reflections.

1. Let us admire and adore the goodness of God, who hath not left himself without witness of a future state in any age of the world. The doctrine of immortality is of infinite importance to the human mind, supplying the most powerful motives to piety and virtue, and the most effectual consolation in the troubles of the present state. And surely we may say that this doctrine has been taught to the world, in a manner as extraordinary, as the nature of it is important to mankind. In three grand religious periods of the world—the Patriarchal, the Levitical, and Christian, the doctrine has been practically demonstrated by the translation of Enoch and Elijah, and the ascension of our blessed Lord. We love to be assured of direct communication between this and a brighter world, if it be but in solitary examples. We rejoice, if there have been witnesses of such events. Of the last and most glorious event of this nature, the ascension of Christ, blessed be God, there was a cloud of witnesses, many of whom sealed the truth of their testimony with their blood. To the faith of this cardinal event, let us resign ourselves with confidence. Christ has risen and ascended, the first fruits of them that slept. Be assured, his true disciples shall follow him, as into the grave, so also into glory. Let this affecting, blessed truth, let this glorious, immortal prospect, elevate our views, our ends, our sentiments, and conduct. No more shall our souls cleave to the dust, nor grovel after

earthly trifles, nor sensual pleasures. By devout and holy desires, by aspiring and pure affections, let them claim the skies. Here we are pilgrims and strangers; here we have no abiding city. Let us seek one which is above, to which Enoch and Elijah, to which our gracious and glorious Redeemer have ascended,—one whose builder and maker is God,—one eternal in the heavens. Again,

2. We should admire the goodness and mercy of God, who, in the darkest seasons, raises up men to be lights in the world, a blessing to their country, and a prop to declining religion. Such was Elijah. There were a few thousands, indeed, in Israel, who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal. But they were obliged to conceal themselves. In this gloomy state of things, the Lord sent Elijah, and religion prevailed, famine ceased, and the nation triumphed over invading and insulting enemies. And hence,

3. Let us as a nation, or smaller community, or as individuals, learn whither to look for light and relief, when a dark and gloomy season is passing over us. History is recorded for our admonition. There is the same God, and as full of mercy to all who will put their trust in him. To him let us look to preside over and bless the nation; to awaken us as a religious society from error, from stupidity, from bitterness, wrath, and clamour; and to bring us back from our wanderings to purity and peace. And as individuals, if we are conscious of coldness and dullness in a christian profession, or a total neglect of his service, let us remember, that he

will visit for these things, except we repent, when he will receive us graciously, and love us freely.

4. It is delightful to draw from our subject the ground of conviction, that God is mindful of his faithful servants, and will finally receive them in the most triumphant manner to glory. The eyes of mortals are not often greeted with the sight of heavenly glory on earth. But death is triumph to the Christian. Whenever we see a faithful servant of God and Christ closing his eyes in death, then let us exult to see, by the eye of faith, his happy spirit encircled by angels, who are a flame of fire, and rising to glory. And Oh! let us be anxious that an exit safe, peaceful and glorious too, may be our's, when we shall be called for. That time is not far off—it will soon be here—we have not a moment to lose. Let us propose to ourselves the bright example, we have been contemplating, of firm attachment to God and true religion, if we stand alone. Let us abide by the covenant of our God, and cling to his altar and ordinances, if it be amidst general neglect.—Then God will reward our fidelity, by granting us his presence when we most need it, in the valley of the shadow of death. And when he, who is the believer's life, shall appear with ten thousands of his saints, to judge the world, we shall appear with him in glory. Amen.

# SERMON XIII.

## DANIEL.

DANIEL X. 19.

O man, greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong.

These words were applied to the prophet Daniel by a divine messenger, whom he saw in a vision, "clothed in linen, his loins girded with fine gold, his body like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved," was his salutation. And when the prophet was ready to faint with astonishment at the glory of his appearance, he reassured him with the same gentle and comforting language. "O man, greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong."

It is not particularly denoted whether he was beloved by God or men; the text may, however, intend both. Certain it is, that the character of Daniel is one of the most perfect in the holy scriptures. His fame for wisdom and rectitude was such, that for these exalted qualities his name became a proverb, even in his lifetime. Ezekiel, speaking of a land visited with divine judgments for its sins, affirms that if Noah, Daniel and Job were there, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness. And the same prophet, speaking to a proud and vain prince, and reproaching him for thinking too highly of himself, says, "Thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret they can hide from thee. Thus, even in his lifetime, for Daniel was cotemporary with Ezekiel, he was regarded the highest example of righteousness and wisdom. This eminence for wisdom and righteousness is the more extraordinary, as no man was ever placed in situations of severer trial. While very young, he was carried a captive to Babylon. For his beauty and talents he was selected as an object of royal favour, and educated in a luxurious and licentious court. He was not only permitted, but required to partake of the provision of the king's table, and of the wine which he drank; but through religious scruple he refrained, resisting the promptings of youthful appetite, and hazarding the displeasure of an absolute monarch. He was a foreigner, and even a captive, yet was exalted to the highest trust and dignity short of the throne.

This station, which he seems to have held under five successive sovereigns, and for nearly half a century, exposed him to the envy and plotting malice of disappointed courtiers, who would have destroyed him, if they could, without any compunctions of conscience respecting the means. Nothing but the power of God could have saved him, or did save him. For he was negligent of his life, steadily pursuing the path of duty, without calculating its tendency with regard to himself. He never flattered the king, nor soothed his enemies. He acted on a simple principle, and had but one inquiry—What is duty?—and the answer decided his conduct. To Nebuchadnezzar he denounced the approaching judgment of God, and boldly counselled him to "break off his sins by repentance, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, that it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity." Still more direct and awful, yet full of tender pathos, was his rebuke to the impious Belshazzar. It is to be remarked, however, that while he was faithful, he was also gentle and courteous in his manners, manifesting that he acted a part which was painful to him, and, as a friend, admonished them of dangers, that by repentance they might escape them. It is not often that monarchs, placed above human control, will consent to hear of their faults, from men beneath them. Daniel was a wonderful exception to this remark. He was greatly beloved by his sovereigns; and the more painfully faithful he was, the more he was caressed and honored by them. They perceived in him integrity, which could

not be tempted in a venal court; a courage, which no earthly power could intimidate; wisdom, which the cunning of courtiers could not circumvent, and a gentle and confiding spirit, with which a monarch could have friendship. No wonder, then, that he was greatly beloved by the five powerful sovereigns, under whose patronage he lived. And no wonder, that the Persian subjects loved him, since his wisdom in the conduct of public affairs, and his influence with the king, lightened their burdens; nor that the Jewish captives loved him, since his counsels and ceaseless prayers were preparing the way for the return to Jerusalem; nor that all the truly pious greatly loved him, as an avowed professor of the true religion in a pagan court, and an open confessor and worshipper of the true God, even against the decree of his sovereign, and in the face of death. For these reasons of personal piety and virtue, we perceive how deservedly Daniel was beloved. I have not mentioned his prophetical character, as having an influence on the public estimation, for we know not how far or generally that was understood. In this respect he was highly favored of God, being permitted to utter a stupendous prophecy, comprehending events of the highest interest to the world, from five hundred and thirty years before Christ to the general resurrection.

From this brief account of Daniel, it is sufficiently evident, that he was greatly beloved of God and men. We perceive, also, that it was a love, excited by great purity and excellence of character. Happy are they, who

are thus beloved of God and men, and happy must they be forever. It behoves us, then, to examine the foundation and elements of this character, and to become what Daniel was, that we may attain a similar happiness : I mean not, that we should become what he was by station ; this is to us inaccessible. It is his personal character, I would hold up to your admiration and imitation ; and this is for us a pattern in every station of life.

If we would be loved of God and men,

I. Our character must be founded in true piety—the fear and love of God.

There is no other stable basis of character, and this was the foundation of rock on which that of Daniel rested. And in him it was early piety. By some, he is supposed to have been but twelve ; by others, eighteen years old, when his piety was subjected to the trials of a corrupt court ; yet it endured the assay, and came out of that fiery crucible, as gold from the furnace. The fear and love of his Maker were the sentiments always alive and awake in his breast. Thus he would not eat at that table, at which false gods were acknowledged, nor drink of wine which was poured in libations to their honor, preferring pulse and water, with a conscience void of offence towards the true God.—And when his enemies had obtained a decree, which made it death to pray, except to the king, it had no influence upon him. In such jeopardy, we might suppose, that he would have contented himself with worshipping in secret. But he thought it a fit occasion to

show his confidence in God; and "when he knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." He improved every opportunity of mentioning the true God in a pagan city, and to pagan monarchs, declaring his providence, his power, his judgments, and his mercy, to procure, if possible, the acknowledgment and worship of him, and him alone. Nor was it wholly without success; for Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus, by solemn decrees, acknowledged Jehovah.—Thus piety was the active principle in Daniel's heart. We perceive the vigor of that principle in his whole course. If tempted to sin, the fear of God restrained him; and the love of God led him to unwearied labors and councils, to advance his glory, and to fulfil his designs of mercy to others. If we would have a consistent character, we must cherish the same sacred principles, a filial fear of God, and a reverential love, and have a constant respect to his will and approbation in all that we do; and never compromise for pleasure, for fear, the fear of death itself, a duty we owe to God. In this high respect, Daniel shines as a light in the world, "a son of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." I proceed to remark,

II. In a character like Daniel's, beloved of God and men, there must be integrity and benevolence, incorruptible integrity; universal benevolence. Keeping the first and great command is no release from that which

is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Indeed, the neglect of the second brings into question our sincerity in regard to the first. For "he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" And on the other hand, if there be a uniform, well-principled love to men, it is some ground to believe, that there is in the same heart also, love to God; as when we see a steady uninterrupted stream, we conclude there is a fountain at the head of it, even if it be entirely out of sight. In corruptible integrity, unbending rectitude, in all our intercourse with men; truth never violated, never suspected; is a character that commands respect, esteem, love. We rest on a bosom sustained by such virtues; we confide without fear of disappointment. And integrity is commonly coupled with benevolence.—Where from principle we are faithful and just to mankind, by the same principle we are disposed to be kind also, and merciful. Rendering justice prepares us to show mercy. Accordingly, the psalmist tells us, "the righteous is merciful, and lendeth." These two traits of character were most eminent in Daniel. For his righteousness he was a proverb; and how dear mercy was to him, we learn from his exhorting an oppressive monarch to show mercy to the poor, employing his influence with the king to diminish the miseries of an empire. If we would be greatly beloved of God and men, we too must do justly and love mercy. We have not so wide a field as Daniel had in a vast empire, in which to exer-

cise these virtues. Still we may exercise them as sincerely and as truly in our smaller spheres ; more especially, I may say, in our domestic relations. To these, probably, Daniel was a stranger. But to many of us, it is a most important field of duties, and by no means the least arduous we have to fulfil. With what tender zeal should we cultivate the sacred charities of husband and wife, of parent and child. If injury falls here, how deep is the wound ! and often, how incurable ! Infidelity here is a shock like death. Unkindness goes to the heart. A hasty word is not soon forgotten. A frown, or even a discontented look, excites an anguished feeling. But no one can describe, the heart only knows, the joys of faithfulness and affection in this relation.

The duties, also, of parents and children should be discharged with peculiar fidelity and affection. What helpless beings are young children without parents ? what name awakens sympathy like that of orphan ? This is, because we have some sense of the importance of parents to children, and of the worth of those offices rendered to them from the cradle to their manhood.—The cares of infancy, early instruction, discipline, education, counsels, as occasions call for them, by which errors are avoided ; a correct course, through the divine blessing, begun, virtuous habits formed, and a religious character in some degree attained—these are the blessings which God confers through the medium of wise and faithful parents. And good children repay the kindness, by dutiful submission and grateful affection, and by every effort to inspire the fairest hopes of future

excellence, that their joyful parents may seem to live their lives over again in their virtuous children. And when they are descending into the vale of age, or languishing with infirmities and disease, it comforts them to lean on filial supporters, and to have their eyes closed by filial hands. To such husbands and such wives, to such parents and such children, may be justly applied the charming character of the text. The world looks on an amiable domestic character with reverence and esteem, and regards him as a blessing to the community. His private virtues have an influence beyond the sanctuary at home. The lovely example is perceived and felt by many. If we would be greatly loved of God and men, then, we must be faithful and tender in the domestic relations.

And not in these only. We must maintain a course of undeviating rectitude in all our intercourse with the world. In the ordinary commerce of life, a sacred regard must be rendered to justice and equity. "Whatsoever we would that others should do unto us, doing so unto them, and looking not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," regarding their interest with a generous impartiality, as well as our own. If it be apparent in a long course of conduct, and in multiplied and extensive operations, that there is this rising above selfishness, this consulting for the good of others in those very measures, which are designed to promote our own, it inevitably secures the esteem and love of men.

Yet still, there are duties more particularly denomi-

nated benevolent, in which the man, who is greatly beloved, eminently takes delight, and which peculiarly endear him to the community in which he lives. What those duties are, and what influence the performance of them has on the minds of men, may be learned from the words of Job :—" When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out."

Not to enlarge on this fruitful head—an upright and benevolent man, especially when his means and talents are distinguished, renders services of high importance to the civil and religious community in which he lives ; sometimes by sustaining important offices, and conferring gratuitous care and labor in securing and promoting the common interests ; at others, by a liberal bestowment of wealth to advance the interests of science, of peace and good morals, to promote the cause of religion, to diffuse the blessing of the holy scriptures, to furnish missionary labors in those parts of the land which are in danger of becoming pagan ; in these, and other disinterested labors and charities, much may an individual do, that shall have an incalculable influence on the prosperity of the community, and the present and future happiness of men. Indeed, the blessings confer-

red by the Fountain of all good, through the instrumentality of one enlightened, reflecting, liberal individual, may exceed our computation, till eternity itself shall throw light upon the subject.

It is needless to say to my beloved hearers, that my mind has been led into this train of reflection, by the death of that distinguished citizen* of the community, and invaluable member of this christian society, in regard to whom we are all ready to say, as well as his afflicted family—"O man, greatly beloved."

It has not been my custom to indulge in eulogy in the sacred desk. And to you it is not necessary on this lamented occasion, who have long known his invariable manner of life, his unbending integrity, and his unsparing benevolence. His country he has served in the high places of the field, and the state in its public councils, and the town in its most important offices, and this society in its interests by his clear and solid judgment, his liberality, and pure and amiable manners.—The poor have found in him, at all times, a merciful friend, and peculiarly liberal in those years of deep distress, which deranged their employments, and choked the channels of their subsistence. To those organized charities, which have contributed a relief to our local poor, which have aimed to promote just notions of peace and war, to suppress the tremendous evils of intemperance, to circulate the sacred scriptures, to furnish missionaries to those destitute of the preached word, he has been a generous contributor, and in several of them

* Moses Brown, Esq.

a most judicious and active officer. But the heart, which was warmed by benevolence, is chilled by death, and the hand, which was prompt to every good work, lies cold in the grave. O man, greatly beloved! may thine example prompt us to undeviating rectitude, and to ceaseless acts of benevolence. * * *

When we lie on the bed of languishing, may the Lord strengthen us, as he does those who have considered the poor. And may survivors have occasion to remark of us—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

# SERMON XIV.

## PETER.

JOHN I. 42.

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.

These simple words describe the first interview between Jesus and his eminent disciple, Peter. His brother Andrew, who, it seems, was a disciple of John the Baptist, having heard his master indicating Jesus to those around him, as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," and bearing record to him "as the Son of God," hastened to communicate the important discovery to Peter, which he did in the following words—"We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

Although Peter was an entire stranger to Jesus, he at once knew the man, his parentage, and his character.

He seems to have looked into his very heart, and to have glanced an eye foward prophetically upon his future history; for he beheld him, and said, "Thou art Simon the Son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone."

What Jesus perceived of the character and history of Peter, by a glance of his mind, has been unfolded fully in the narrative of the evangelists, and of the historian of the apostles; and I have thought it might be profitable to collect together in one discourse, the most important circumstances of his life, and traits of his character, for our own admonition, warning and encouragement. If this task should be successfully performed, you will perceive resulting from the whole, a character of great peculiarity and strength; great excellencies, shaded by a few great faults. And we cannot be too solicitous to copy the former, and to shun the latter. There is a great varietyof natural temper and disposition among persons of real piety. Some of lively affections, and of strong and sudden passions, frequently offend through indiscreet and unseasonable exertions of zeal. And the calm and sedate, while they deliberate coolly and judge wisely, often are deficient in that fervor, courage and activity, which are necessary to usefulness and excellence. Of the former class is Peter; sanguine, courageous, impetuous, and sincere; yet, when surprised by sudden and extreme dangers, liable to be seized with panick and utterly confounded. Thomas was the opposite of Peter; slow of heart to believe, yet, once convinced, firm as a rock. But I proceed to a sketch of Peter's life.

Peter was an inhabitant of Bethsaida, a city in Galilee, lying at the northern extremity of the lake Gennesareth, where he followed the humble occupation of fishing, and had a family. However laborious was his employment, he was negligent of his religious interest and duty; but hearing of Jesus, he immediately repaired to judge for himself, whether he were the Messiah, of whom the nation were then in expectation. He seems, however, to have returned to his old employment, and dwelt in Capernaum, for it was in his house, that Jesus miraculously healed his wife's mother of a fever. Not long after this, Jesus attached him as a constant follower, by an incident, which effectually convinced him of his miraculous character. Peter had toiled all night in his vessel, and had caught nothing; when, at the suggestion of Jesus, he once more let down his net, and at one draught, inclosed an immense quantity of fishes. Peter was overwhelmed with conviction and awe, by this miracle, and felt the deepest abasement in whiat he believed to be the presence of the Messiah. But Jesus said unto him, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shall catch men." In this figurative manner, he called him to the apostleship. Peter understood the call; disregarding every worldly motive, he forsook all, the nets, his vessel, his friends, and relatives, that he might devote himself entirely to Christ, and the ministry of his word.

Not long after this, he was in a most solemn manner, with eleven others, set apart to the apostolic office, and sent forth to preach the Gospel, and to confirm its

truth by miracles. On this and other occasions, when the twelve are enumerated, Peter stands at the head of the list. It nowhere appears, however, that any authority was given to him, over the other apostles; nor that he was otherwise distinguished, than by the excellency of his personal character.

The peculiar temper and character of this apostle were displayed in a most lively and striking manner, in the time of a tempest on the lake. Jesus had directed the disciples to cross the lake, while he dismissed the multitude. Most of the following night our Lord passed in prayer on a mountain. In the mean time, the disciples were tost with the tempest; and Jesus, commiserating their terrors, approached them, walking on the sea. When Peter perceived who it was, with a transport of faith and love, he cried out, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Here you see an overweaning self-confidence, such as usually goes before a fall. To rebuke it, and to show to this disciple his weakness, that he might be more on his guard in future, he gave him leave; "and he walked on the water to go to Jesus." Appalled, however, by the tempest, he soon began to sink, and cried, "Lord, save me!" Jesus stretched out his hand and saved him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This incident should have made a deeper impression on the apostle's mind, at least a more lasting one, and it would then have prevented a far more dreadful fall, and the occasion of bitter repentance.

On a subsequent occasion, this apostle gave a most

seasonable and welcome evidence of the sincerity of his faith and warmth of affection to his Master. The multitude had taken great offence at the highly figurative and spiritual doctrine, which he had been delivering, and even many of his professed disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus sensibly felt this desertion, and turning to the twelve with an affecting appeal, said, "Will ye also go away?" The ardent Peter replied—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Precious confession! which it becomes us to cherish, through good report and ill report, if we desire to be confessed by him before his Father, and the holy angels. Not long after this, when Jesus inquired of the twelve, what opinions were entertained of him by others, and what were their personal thoughts concerning him, Peter, in almost the same words, again declared, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus then blessed him for the good confession, and assured him that he would employ him as an important instrument in building his church, against which the gates of hell should not prevail. This high commendation took strong hold on the susceptible heart of Peter. He was probably too much elated by it; for when Jesus, soon after, was unfolding to his disciples, the humiliating and suffering scenes through which he was to pass at Jerusalem, Peter, with a strange boldness and familiarity, "took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." How

dreadful was the rebuke of his Master, addressed to Peter! "Get thee behind me, Satan. for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men." It seems that Jesus perceived, that he was entertaining thoughts of a temporal kingdom, and he rebuked his ignorance and presumption with severity. How careful should we be, not to subject ourselves to a like rebuke, by suffering worldly and ambitious motives to mingle with and corrupt our religion. How many, is it to be feared, there are, who zealously cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," while it is in fact the advancement of a sect, or their personal interest, or reputation, which is secretly regarded. While we are careful to judge the hearts of others in this respect with tenderness, let us faithfully examine and judge our own, that we may not, in the great day, receive the rebuke which was given to Peter.

Notwithstanding the faults, which sometimes appeared in Peter, Jesus loved him, and on particular occasions distinguished him as one of his three select friends. All the disciples, as well as Peter, had been cast into a deep gloom by the disclosure, which Jesus had made of his approaching sufferings. Our Lord, therefore, thought it expedient to show the brighter, as well as the darker side of the picture; his glory, as well as his humiliation, to a competent number of witnesses. Peter was the first named of the favored three, to witness his glory on the mount of transfiguration; and it was he, who cried out in rapturous delight, in the midst

of the glory, as if he would abide there forever, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." How deep the impression of this glorious scene was upon his mind, we perceive by a passage of his second epistle, written a short time before his martyrdom, in which he expressly refers to it, as a convincing proof of the Messiahship of Jesus; "therefore we have not followed cunningly devised fables; but were eye-witnesses of his majesty, for he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

In giving a sketch of so eventful a life, as that of Peter, I must necessarily pass over many minor incidents. I may just remark, however, that he stands distinguished by the ardor of his affection for Jesus, and by the earnestness of his zeal on all occassions. He was faithful, bold, and vigorous, in the work appointed him, ever watching the motions, eager before all the rest to do the will of his Lord. This was an eminent qualification for his arduous work, as an apostle of christianity, bnt required, as we shall see, the necessity of restraint, and was on some occasions, the source of danger.

One of the strongest evidences of the truth of he gospel history is the perfect simplicity and frankness, with which the sacred writers record their own faults. There was frequent occasion to do this; not

merely of Judas, but of the whole. The faults of the warm-hearted apostle, of whom I am discoursing, are recorded with great particularity; more especially his most disgraceful denial of his Master. The four evangelists represent the unhappy transaction, none however in a more heinous light than Mark. Now Mark was Peter's disciple; accompanied him in his travels to preach the gospel, and wrote, as the ancient fathers generally agree, the Gospel which goes by his name, under the inspection and dictation of Peter. If in considerating his fall, we shall perceive the most lamentable weakness and heinous guilt, in his thus humbling himself before God, and all generations of men, as long as the Gospel shall be read, we have the strongest imaginable evidence of sincerity and deep contrition. With as much brevity as we can, let us consider the circumstances of Peter's fall.

Our blessed Lord had celebrated the Passover, instituted the Supper, and washed his disciples' feet, performing all these acts, in a manner adapted to make the best impression on their minds. They were affected, and professed, Peter particularly, the most immoveable attachment to him. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," said the confident apostle. And when warned by Jesus, that he would thrice deny him that very night, before its second watch was completed, he affirmed vehemently, "If I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee in any wise." This was probably honest language, but it clearly betrayed "that haughty spirit which goes before a fall." At all

times, especially in great trials, how needful is that petition of the psalmist—"Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." Our Lord continued to admonish Peter on that dreadful night, while he retired with him in the garden of Gethsemane. He bade him watch, while he himself retired to pray. But he fell asleep. He returned and expostulated with him; and alluding to his profession of greater zeal and confidence than others, he said, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Yet with astonishing remissness he again feel asleep. This was a poor attitude in which to meet the severe trial which followed.

Presently after, Judas, with an armed band, came to seize Jesus. Then Peter drew his sword, and wounded a servant of the high Priest, by this rash act, exposing himself and their little party, to be cut to pieces. Jesus rebuked an act so contrary to his peaceful doctrine, assuring him that, if necessary, legions of angels were ready for his protection. But when he saw his Master seized and led away a prisoner, his boasted courage failed him, and he fled for his own safety. He seemed for a moment to recover himself, and followed at a distance, and adventured into the hall of judgment; but it was only to dishonor himself and his Master the more scandalously. He mingled with the profane crowd; heard their light speeches;—and here in an evil hour commenced his temptation. He was accused by a woman, and was afraid or ashamed to acknowledge himself a disciple of one, then arraigned before the priests

and elders; he was accused by another, and denied his Master with vehemence; and again by others, and then, even with oaths and curses, he denied that he knew him. At this moment he heard the well known signal; the cock crew a second time. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter," perhaps with a reproving, perhaps with a pitying, perhaps with a reconciling and gracious look. It melted the fallen and disgraced apostle; "and he went out and wept bitterly."—When we consider the history and character of the man, we stand amazed at the scandal before us. It is recorded for our admonition. It is erected on sacred ground as a perpetual beacon to those who should come after, to warn them against self-confidence, however eminent their christian character may be; to put them upon vigilance to descry their dangers; upon prayer for divine protection; upon caution to avoid places of temptation and danger, and to shun evil company. These are excellent ends, to which the fall of this eminent apostle may be improved. There are persons, however, on whom the falls of eminent men, recorded in scripture, have a pernicious influence to encourage them in habits, of which the sins of those men were but single acts, sins, too, from which they rose by a repentance as deep and exemplary as the sins were great and scandalous. For such abuse of these warning examples, they must answer.

To return to Peter. His repentance was instant upon his ;fall and how sincere, the sequel of his history will show. We hear nothing more of him, before the morn-

ing of our Lord's resurrection. On the first rumor that he had left the sepulchre, Peter and John ran with the utmost haste thither. The angel directed the women to tell the disciples and Peter, mentioning his name in particular, that the risen Jesus would meet them in Galilee. On the same day, Jesus manifested himself to Peter, before he appeared to the other apostles. His broken and penitent heart needed the balm thus administered. When he exhibited himself at the sea of Tiberias, to the disciples, and repeated the very miracle by which Peter had at first been convinced he was the Messiah, how condescending was this to that unhappy disciple. Peter cast himself into the sea, to hasten to his Master. After the disciple had dined with Jesus, a most affecting dialogue took place between him and Peter. Thrice Peter had denied him; thrice he asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? lovest thou me? Peter, with the deepest emotion and humility, and without any comparison of himself, with others, replied, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said unto him, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." This was a formal reinstating of his penitent disciple in his apostleship, and, therefore, an assurance of his forgiveness. If we desire to see the fruits of Peter's repentance, we need only to look into the first twelve chapters of the Acts of the apostles, and the two epistles which bear his name. In the whole suceeding part of his life appear a burning zeal, a fearless courage, an untiring toil in preaching the gospel. We have not time to follow him in his bright career, and remark

at large on its important incidents. I may just observe, that on the memorable day of Pentecost, it was he, who addressed the multitude with such convincing argument, and pungent application, that thousands were brought to repentance and faith in the Gospel. It was Peter, who said to the cripple, that lay at the Beautiful gate of the temple, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee," and in the name of Jesus healed him. And so effectually did he address the multitude, who ran together to behold the miracle, that thousands more believed, and were added to the church. The apostles being arraigned before the sanhedrim, Peter was the speaker; and that timid man, who lately denied his Master, now boldly charges his judges with crucifying the Christ, "whom God had raised from the dead." It was not a solitary miracle which was wrought; many signs and wonders were performed by the hands of the apostles among the people. Peter, on these, as on all occasions, attracted special attention; "they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them; and they were healed, every one." These miracles, which should have convinced, only enraged the Jewish rulers; and all the apostles were cast into the common prison. An angel delivered them from confinement, and immediately they preached the Gospel in the temple. And when again brought before the council, Peter, nothing daunted, replied to the rebuke—"We ought to obey God rather than men," and again

charged them with crucifying, as a malefactor, that very person, whom God had raised from the dead, and exalted to the highest glory, as a prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel. A brighter picture of faith, and zeal, and christian intrepidity cannot well be imagined. After this, Peter and John were delegated from the apostles to preach in Samaria, and impart spiritual gifts. It was there he rebuked Simon, the sorcerer, because he thought the gift of God could be purchased with money. In short, this indefatigable apostle passed through all quarters, preaching the gospel and confirming it with miracles. Though the "apostle of the circumcision," he was the first directed by a heavenly vision, to preach it to the gentiles.

Time will permit me to mention but one incident more, in the eventful life of this apostle. A violent persecution arose against the church, and Herod Agrippa, having killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and perceiving it pleased the Jews, seized Peter also, and thrust him into prison, loaded with chains, and guarded by sixteen soldiers, determining soon to bring him out to execution for the entertainment of the people.—But the prayers of the church continually went up for him; and once more God sent his angel for his rescue. Instantly his chains fell off; the iron gates, without a human hand, flew open, and this favored servant of the Redeemer walked forth through the midst of sentinels in perfect safety. Notwithstanding his activity, and boldness, and the extent of his travels and labors among hostile and persecuting Jews and Gentiles, the life of this eminent apostle was preserved to an advan-

ced age. And his labors were not for that age only. His two epistles are preserved in the sacred canon for the instruction of all generations.

The death of this ardent apostle was worthy of the life, which he had spent in zealous and ceaseless efforts, to spread the gospel. He sealed it with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom, as his Master had predicted to him. According to the best accounts he was crucified at Rome, under the reign of Nero, and about the same time with his fellow apostle, St. Paul.

Thus have I given you an imperfect sketch of the life of Peter; interweaving brief remarks to render his example profitable. In most respects, it is in a high degree edifying and animating, and in others it is a most solemn warning to the best and the highest, "lest, while they think they stand, they should also fall." There is a proneness in inconsiderate men, to gaze intensely and with satisfaction on the falls of good men, and to proclaim the blots on their escutcheon. It seems to render the painful distance between them less, to reduce good and bad, great and little, somewhat nearer to a level. By some such men, Peter is almost classed with the traitor Judas. Our blessed Lord did not so estimate the affectionate, sincere, and ardent Peter; and so must not we estimate him. He rebuked his faults, but still cherished him as one of the first, if not the very first of the twelve; and honored him as the most conspicuous instrument of pleading his cause, honored him in its first dreadful struggles with Jewish prejudice and malignity. Did he fall shamefully? I

defend not the faults of good men; but be it remembered, he repented immediately, and continually, and to the last moments of his devoted life. Did he betray pusillanimous weakness? he exhibited ever after, fearless courage in the cause of his Master, in the face of all the powers of the world arrayed against him.—Was he often forward, presumptuous, and rash? Let not the careless and indolent censure him for this, nor for a moment imagine, that their caution and inactivity are more pleasing to God, than the honest warmth of those, who, like Peter, may occasionally over-act their part. The latter may be often, but the former, if destitute of love and zeal, are never right.

Finally, when we consider the zeal, and fortitude, the labors and sufferings of Peter, and of all the noble army of martyrs, who counted not their lives dear to them for the gospel, let us cherish the same energetic faith, and adhere, in every trial, to the same divine principles. But we shall falter and fall, except we watch and pray, and lean continually on that gracious support, which finally carried them through. They have entered into glory, and are interested spectators of our conflict. "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnessess, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author, and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

# SERMON XV.

## FRUITS OF RENOVATION.

ROMANS xii. 2.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

It cannot have escaped the attentive reader of the apostolic epistles, that matters of doctrine and argumentative discussion, and sometimes of local interest, occupy the first part and body of the epistle; and that the sacred writer reserves the conclusion, to be filled with an earnest statement of christian duties, with close appeals to the conscience, and hortatory addresses to different classes and descriptions of his readers, the end of which is to make them "holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." The four last chapters of the epistle to the Romans are thus occupied. In the first part of this epistle, as Peter observes, "there are things

hard to be understood;" subjects, which the profound minds of Newton, Locke, and Taylor, have been scarcely able to fathom; yet the ample and practical conclusion of the whole, in the chapters just mentioned, is level to the humblest minds, and obvious to the understandings of children. Many are bewildered and lost in the mazes of the apostle's argumentation; but his improvement is a highway, "the way of holiness," and so plain, that "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

The gospel, as the beginning of our text intimates, is a comprehensive system of duty, differing widely from the maxims of the world. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Romans, "Be not conformed to the world." Yet Christians must not rest in sentiments and opinions, but carry them out into acts and habits; as he proceeds to exhort—"be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Let there be a true renovation of the understanding, to discern the perfect will of God, and of the heart, that it may incline to be conformed to it, and of the life, that it may be distinguished by those virtues and habits, which constitute actual conformity to the divine will. This seems the import of the text. And in a variety of directions given in verses following the text, his meaning is more fully explained. It is my intention, in this discourse, to advert to the principle of these doctrines; they show something of what renovation is, when carried out into

the life; what the fountain, when seen in its pure and cheering streams. And,

I. He who complies with the apostle's directions, "abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good."

This is a general account of the Christian's mind and conduct. He cherishes an utter aversion to every kind and degree of moral evil, or sin. He does not allow his mind to hesitate in a moment of temptation, as if there could be any excepted case. He studies to have an enlightened view of good and evil, and his approbation or indignant feeling is excited at once. He does not hesitate, and balance, and waver: he abhors that which is evil; and no momentary impulse from the passions or appetites, or from the world, is permitted to allure him into conduct, inconsistent with this cherished sentiment within: he resolutely "cleaves to that which is good." There can be nothing more important to a human being than this enlightened and decided state of mind. It breaks the force of temptation at its onset; it discourages tempters in human form, and awes them to a distance by this repulsive dignity, and firmness of principle. Indeed, it is an attitude, in which the thought of evil will scarcely suggest itself to the heart. It finds you habitually prepared for resistance, and flees from you. Uniformly "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good."

You may here be ready to imagine, that this stern and unshaken decision and adherence to virtue may produce pride, and a looking down upon others with

contempt, and upon ourselves with complacency. But this will not be, if the directions of the apostles are regarded. For,

II. He bids every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, and in honor, to prefer one another. Not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate; and not to be wise in one's own conceit." Thus one thing is beautifully set over against another, in the christian scheme of morals; and the sweet grace of humility, accompanies the most unbending rectitude. This lovely compound differs essentially from the purest virtue of the old Romans; which whatever it was, was attended with "rank pride and haughtiness of soul." But the Christian, whatever he may have attained, perceives still great deficiencies which humble him, and great heights of virtue to be reached, which make present attainments seem as nothing. His own imperfections are much better known to him, because, continually studied and noted, than those of other Christians, which are either out of sight, or noticed by him with generous candor, as the gospel requires. It is not therefore for him, so difficult a task, as men of a worldly spirit might suppose, "in honor to prefer others to himself;" or "to condescend to men of low estate;" nor to imagine, that He, who searches the heart, may discern in Christians of humble standing, and of feebler talents, and of unpretending piety and virtue, more of purity and sincerity, and devotedness than in himself. Many, who in almost all other respects, are poor in this world, may be "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom," in an em-

inent degree. Humility is the most important of christian graces. It converts a heart a into living temple for God, "With this man will I dwell, with him who is of a humble heart." He exalts the humble, he abases the proud. It assimilates a soul to Christ; for he was "meek and lowly of heart." No wonder, then, that the apostle, in this single chapter, enforces this grace with repeated injunctions. It is a lovely temper of soul, disposing it to many other inestimable virtues and affections. It prepares the soil of the heart spontaneously to send forth a variety of the most precious fruits.

Accordingly I remark,

III. The apostle enjoins on Christians undissembled love, in all the relations of life, and intercourse with men: "Let love be without dissimulation: be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality." If but these brief hints, on the subject of love, be fully complied with by the Christian, what an object of esteem and veneration will he be? In the first place, there is in him no affectation of what is not felt. His love is without dissimulation. How different is this from very much of the affection and friendship professed in the world! the hollowness and selfishness of which appears in sudden and capricious changes, in treacherous abuse of confidence, in a blighting coldness, and bitter alienation and hostility. The Christian is sincere in his professed love; and he cannot easily veer about in his affections; nor cast off friends and brethren, whom he has once embraced. They may become unworthy;

but even then he will feel nothing but kindness for them, and will render every prudent token of benevolence to them, even in answer to desertion, coldness, and unkindness. See the affectionate Christian in his family. It is there his influence is continually felt.—Benignity beams from his serene countenance, on the little circle, and warms and cheers the whole. His example effects wonders. Who can be harsh in speech, when the head is always gentle? Or fall into dissension, with an invariable pattern of peace and love before them? Who can be disobedient to commands, which evidently flow from love, or slight authority, which is sustained with so much affection, and which is never exerted but for the good of those who feel its restraint? It is impossible to calculate the blessings, present and future, conferred on a family by a discreet and uniformly affectionate parent. I know very well that a family may be ruined by a silly fondness in a parent, which he may mistake for christian affection; a fondness which denies nothing to children, and permits them to follow their own inclinations. It is no such thing, which I am recommending. It is an enlightened, well-principled christian affection; and which is the best of all foundations of family authority. The fondness I spoke of, destroys all authority; and authority gone, there is no submission, nor obedience, nor order. In such a state of things, there will soon be found confusion and every evil work. But the parent, who begins to exert authority in the infancy of his child, and then, and always, tempers it with affection, will be

equally loved and feared. In his dwelling, there will be order and peace, and love among the members, and the habits there formed may be transplanted to other families, and perpetuated in successive generations. Let all who have been "transformed by the renewing of their mind," constantly display this sweet fruit of their renovation in their families. In the domestic sanctuary, let love be without dissimulation. Nature is wont to prompt the members of a family to affection; christianity should render that affection more pure, more tender, more beneficent. And certainly, if love be wanting, and dissension and bitterness prevail among the members of a family, whatever professions be made abroad, a very essential evidence of piety is wanting. It is where brethren dwell together in unity, that the "Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore."

But the christian affection, which the apostle enjoins so repeatedly in this chapter, is not to be confined to the domestic circle. It must embrace kindred families, and neighborhoods, and all to whom its kindly influence can be extended. He, who is affectionate in principle, will be always ready to extend his benevolence to all with whom he has intercourse. He, will seek occasions to manifest the good feelings which he cherishes, even to those who expect it not. He will strive to narrow the distance between Jews and Samaritans; to conciliate the prejudiced; to reconcile the alienated; to interest the indifferent; and to win the bitter and hostile. And O! how much can one affectionate

Christian accomplish towards reducing contentious families, and jarring neighborhoods, and hostile sects to peace.

Where there is love without dissimulation, it will manifest itself, as the apostle enjoins, "in distributing to the necessity of the saints, and in being given to hospitality." In the apostle's times, there were loud calls to substantial charity. Large collections were made in different and distant churches, for the suffering saints at Jerusalem; of these collections, mention is made in the Acts, and the epistles. It was a difficult day, on account of the persecutions raging in many places, and the dreadful calamities brought on Jerusalem, by the Romans. The apostles availed themselves of the occasion to awaken sympathy for the sufferers, and to make collections for their relief. Thus distant Christians were interested in each other, and churches, widely separated, were bound together by the mutual ties of kindness and gratitude; and all were exercised and improved in christian graces. The poor, poor saints, we have always with us, and have continual occasion to minister to their necessity. Let our hearts be warmed with the grace of charity, that we may do good unto all; but "especially to those who are of the household of faith."

It is a day of great interest to the church of the Redeemer in the world. It is extending itself, through human instrumentality, in all directions. Let us share in the holy enterprize, and contribute, as God shall give us ability, in every way which an enlightened judgment can approve, to promote the divine glory, and human sal-

vation. Some of the many plans of the day we may not be able to approve : let us encourage those which we can. Are there not many whom God has blest with wealth, who do little, or nothing in sacred charity ? Where is fled that spirit of many of our forefathers, who sacredly devoted a tithe of their income for charitable purposes ? We should not wait for objects of our charity, to present themselves ; we should seek them out, and wisely and judiciously appropriate, as an enlightened conscience shall dictate. To contribute to the circulation of the pure word of God, without note or comment, is a noble and unexceptionable charity. But I must not enlarge on this point. Indulge me a few words on a kindred subject. The apostles would have Christians " given to hospitality ;" to " entertain strangers." There is a great change from the customs which prevailed in the times of Abraham, Moses, and David ; of Christ and the apostles, in regard to entertaining strangers. Public provision is now made for those who were formerly made welcome in private families. The change may have been a convenient one, but it may be questioned, whether in a moral point of view, the patriarchal custom were not incomparably the best. It had a happy tendency to promote the best affections extensively in the community ; to create and revive friendships ; to prevent and remove prejudices, and to render a community more generally affectionate and united. See the happy influence of this ancient custom, preserved in that sect of Christians, who, with some propriety, denominate themselves the Friends.

While it would be hopeless to propose a return to the ancient custom, we should be anxious to practise this lovely virtue of hospitality, as far as practicable. There is still room for the exercise of it; and sweet are its pleasures, and precious its influences, on a generous, and liberal, and christian mind. Let us remember that it is a virtue of the christian family; and the apostle tells us it has been highly rewarded—"for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

IV. I pass, to another important subject mentioned by the apostle, the manner in which Christians should conduct to enemies. He touches this subject in the compass of a few verses, again and again, as if nothing could, in his view, be more important. "Bless them who curse you; bless and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Truly admirable is every one of these injunctions. I could wish to remark upon them separately, but the time fails. Their meaning is, in general, very plain. I just observe, that the strong expression, "in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head," is a metaphor, supposed to be taken from the metals, by covering the ore with burning coals. The meaning is,

that by constant, persevering kindness to an enemy, you will melt down the hardest heart, and bring it to a better temper. The first Christians, we perceive, were exhorted to this high morality, when they were hunted by their enemies like wild beasts, and persecuted with fire and fagot, with racks and tortures. We live in peaceable times; yet these precious christian precepts must not be forgotten nor neglected. Such are the passions, and imprudences, and misunderstandings of men, that daily occasion is afforded, by these christian means, of extinguishing resentments and enmities. And are we Christians, if we excuse ourselves, under any provocations whatever, from obedience to these sweet precepts? Obey them, and the very spirit of Christ is in you. When reviled, he reviled not again, and prayed for his murderers amidst the anguish of crucifixion. But if you are overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good; if you cannot bless them, who persecute you; bless and curse not—especially if you recompense evil for evil, and avenge yourselves; you have not the spirit of Christ, and are none of his.

The time has not been sufficient, fully, to accomplish the original design of this discourse; but enough has been said to show what a lovely character the precepts of the gospel are intended to form. A foundation is laid in a renovation of the mind, by which the Christian cherishes and maintains an abhorrence of that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. Yet nothing of Roman pride is permitted to mingle with his unshaken love and practice of rectitude. The christian grace of

humility attends and adorns the whole, so that he thinks not of himself more highly than he ought to think; but looks round upon others with sentiments of candor, and feelings of kindness and affection. In such a heart reigns the grace which is greater even than faith and hope. His love is undissembled in the family; in the circle of kindred; in the neighborhood and community; every where its sweet influence is felt, promoting peace and happiness, relieving the wants of the poor, especially the poor members of Christ's body, and advancing the interests of his kingdom in the world. It loves and fulfils the sacred duties of hospitality, and strangers share n those kind offices, which are so tenderly rendered under the domestic roof. But this christian affection rejects all limit to its expansion and embrace; it comprehends enemies, the bitterest enemies, as objects of its blessing and kind offices.

And now let me bring this picture home to ourselves, my christian friends, and let us ask ourselves, in the presence of Him, who judges the heart, if an humble likeness is to be found in our hearts, affections, habits, and manners? For it is in vain for us to say, Lord, Lord, if we do not the things which he says. In vain is it, to eat and drink in his presence, to teach in his name, and, if we had the power, to cast out devils, and do many wonderful works, except we "abhor every thing which is evil, and cleave to every thing which is good." To keep our hearts from evil, to sanctify them as holy temples for the divine residence, to cultivate christian graces, and above all the rest,

*love*; love to our God and Redeemer; love to the members of his body; charity to all around us, benevolence and kind offices to our enemies, performed, repeated, continued, till their enmity is subdued—these are the things in which God delights more than in whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. With such affections, sentiments, and purposes, let us this day approach the table of our blessed Lord and exemplar. Let a view of his love, praying, dying for his enemies, melt us into meekness, and dissolve our hearts into a fountain of those sweet affections, which have been now enjoined upon us. And let it be our continual prayer, our untiring endeavor, while we live, to "add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

"Now unto Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever," Amen.

# SERMON XVI.

## AQUILA AND PRISCILLA.

ROMANS, xvi. 3, 4, 5.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

The excellent persons, whom the apostle characterizes in this passage, have been several times mentioned with commendation in the scriptures. It is true there is not much said of them; but the little, that is recorded, presents them in a very interesting light. It seems, that they, with other Jews, were expelled from Rome by a decree of the Emperor Claudius. This event was probably regarded by them as a great misfortune; but God seems to have overruled it for peculiar good to them and others. They were just quietly settled in the city of Corinth, when Paul, retiring from Athens, where he had preached the gospel with but little succes s

found this Jewish couple, and took up his residence in their family. It is said of Aquila by the ancients, that he was a learned man; and we know that Paul had been educated with the best advantages afforded to any of his countrymen. Yet it is remarkable, that the circumstance which first brought them to live together was, that they wrought at the same craft, for by their occupation they were tent-makers.

Though brought together by a circumstance so inconsiderable, a lasting and holy friendship was formed between them. It was a christian friendship, and, I believe, never interrupted for a moment by any of the trying scenes, through which they were called to pass. It seems most probable, that this excellent couple, whose names are imperishably associated with the records of our faith, were ignorant of christianity, till their acquaintance with Paul. But the precious opportunities afforded by their daily intercourse in the family and in their labour, were not lost. The heart of that apostle was always full of one great subject; of Christ and him crucified. The narration concerning Aquila and Priscilla is too concise to furnish particulars; but we have reason to believe, that they became converts to the gospel under Paul's instruction. Every sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue and persuaded the Jews and Greeks. With the Jews generally he was unsuccessful. And when they "opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." For the greater

convenience of receiving the Gentiles, he left the family of Aquila and Priscilla, and dwelt in the same city with a devout Gentile by the name of Justus. But if they lost the daily conversation of the apostle, they seem to have enjoyed his ministry for eighteen months, and to have become enlightened disciples of Jesus. And when Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, they accompanied him thither, and remained to profit that church by their instructions and example, while he went to Jerusalem. Their gifts and bright example were no doubt of great effect. To them, Apollos was indebted "for understanding the way of God more perfectly;" the same, who was one of the most eloquent of christian preachers, "mightily convincing the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ." From Ephesus they returned to Rome, and were there when Paul wrote his epistle to the Christians in that city; and how deep a sense he entertained of their kindness to him, and of their christian worth, appears by the warm encomiums he expresses in his salutations in the text. In writing to the Corinthians from Philippi, it appears, that these were with him, and he mentions them in the most respectful and affectionate manner,—"The churches of Asia, salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church which is in their house." And in the epistle which he wrote to Timothy, just before his martyrdom, he desires him to salute, in his behalf, those honored individuals. Thus we see the strength of affection, which he felt for these beloved converts, ever after his first acquaintance with them, or their

conversion to christianity. In the text, in his epistle to the Roman church, he sends his special greeting to them; acknowledging the important assistance he had received from them, in advancing the cause of Christ. He particularly mentions his personal obligations to them, in this strong language—"who have for my life laid down their own necks"—meaning that they had exposed their own lives, in times of persecution and danger, to rescue that of the apostle. For which zeal and kindness, not only he, but all the church of the Gentiles, gave them thanks. At the same time, he intimated the excellence of their domestic character, by greeting the church in their house. The recorded circumstances of the lives of Aquila and Priscilla, and particularly those noticed in the text, cannot fail to be interesting, from their connexion with the early fortunes of christianity, and the pattern they furnish of faithful duty in the most interesting relations.

I. A prominent trait, which arrests our notice, is their mutual strength of affection and union of counsels.—The one is never mentioned in the scriptures without the other. They were united alike in the cares of common life, and in those of religion. Did the decree of the emperor become the occasion of banishment to one. The other attended, the alleviator of care, and comforter of exile. Thus sharing in common the allotment of common life, they together embraced the faith of the gospel; and walked together in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Their religious union is particularly mentioned on a very im-

portant occasion—that of expounding the way of God, more perfectly, to the eloquent Apollos, and of engaging his holy zeal and powerful talents in the cause of Christ. And it cannot be doubted, that they were perfectly united in the religious conduct of their family. If they had children, they united in bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; they kept the precious task daily in hand, carefully instructing them in the great truths of the gospel, and initiating them in obedience to all its holy precepts, exciting and restraining them, as they required, with a firm and gentle discipline. And how comparatively easy was this task, while they were "joined together in one mind and judgment." The instructions of one were confirmed by the other; the one planted, the other watered, and God gave the increase. But I shall again touch this subject under another head of the discourse. Such was their exemplary harmony and affectionate concert, in temporal and spiritual concerns. We observe,

II. That the apostle acknowledges them "his helpers in Christ." This they doubtless were, by their hospitality, by their constant attendance on his ministry, by their conversation, by their prayers, and by hazarding their lives in his behalf.

By their hospitality. When Paul first came to Corinth, they at once received him to their house. Although very probably he was not chargeable to them, as he wrought with his own hands, this countenance and friendship tended to his comfort and the furtherance of the gospel. It conciliated the Jews to give him a pa-

tient hearing, that so respectable a Jew and Jewess entertained him as a friend. To their influence it may have been owing, that he was permitted to "reason in the synagogue every Sabbath day and to persuade Jews and Greeks." He thus had a most favourable opportunity of urging the gospel upon his countrymen, for whom on all occasions he testified the deepest solicitude. And we may believe, that it was not wholly without success, although most of them, through deep-rooted prejudices, resisted his appeal.

By their constant attendance on his ministry, they were doubtless his helpers. By this means, they made such progress in christian knowledge, as soon to become guides and teachers of others. An example of constant attendance in the ministry of the word has great influence upon others. We see this in seasons of religious excitement, in a very striking light. The anxiety of some to hear swells the current to the house of God, and the deep and solemn attention of some produces an affecting solemnity throughout the congregation. But in proportion as the assembly becomes thin, and the attention seems drowsy and careless, or dissatisfied and captious, the minister labors with a heavy and almost despairing heart. None but they who stand in a place like this, can tell, or conceive, how much the assembly acts on the preacher, how much the air and manner of the hearers encourage or dishearten him. Methinks I see the exemplary Aquila and Priscilla, rising early on the Sabbath, attending their domestic and private worship, interesting their family

by imploring a blessing on the expected privileges of the day, conducting them to the synagogue, and there, with a fixed gaze, and almost breathless interest, listening to the great apostle, "preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ." And thus were they, in a high degree, his helpers in Christ.

They were his helpers by their conversation. If they did much by their silent example in the church, by their interesting, judicious, and earnest discourse out of it, they did more. How powerful their aid in this respect, we may judge by the fact already mentioned. Apollos came to their city, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, fervent in spirit, and a diligent teacher; but he knew only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla invited him to their house, disclosed to him the more perfect instruction, which they had received from the Apostle. The effect of the disclosure was creditable to both. They were not deterred by his superior talents, eloquence, and popularity as a public teacher, from attempting to lead him from John to Christ; from a defective view of the gospel to that which was more perfect. And he, although a powerful preacher, was willing to see, that, "he who was least in the kingdom of heaven, in the gospel dispensation, was greater than John." Now when we consider, that Apollos after this became a christian preacher of so much eloquence and power, as to be compared with the chief of the apostles,—for said the divided Corinthians, "I am of Paul and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas"—we cannot but see the blessed fruit of

this conversation with that holy couple. And we may rest assured, that this was not a solitary instance of their exerting a salutary influence in private conversation, to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of souls. How often they laboured to convince gainsayers, to calm the rage of bigoted Jews, to attract the attention and to enlighten the minds of Gentiles, that they might "turn them from dumb idols to serve the living God," we are not informed; but we have ground for believing, that in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Rome, by their pure and enlightened conversation, they were efficient helpers of Paul in spreading the gospel of Christ.

So were they by hazarding their lives for his. Such was the murderous bigotry of the Jews generally, that in every place they sought the life of Paul, "as a ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes." His life was often in imminent danger, and rescued by the interposition of his friends, with great risk to themselves. On some occasions of this kind, this christian pair had shown heroic courage and friendship, which Paul most feelingly acknowledges. I observe once more,

III. That these devout converts had a church in their house; and by this means also, were the apostles helpers in Christ.

It does not appear to me quite certain what is intended in the text, by "the church in their house." Most probably, however, Christians met for worship and the ordinances, at their residence. For it was in a heathen city, and they could scarcely have had, so early, houses appropriated to worship. They were

obliged to hold their meetings often in secret, to avoid interruption and persecution. If this be what Paul intended, then these zealous disciples opened their doors for the accommodation of the company of believers. Whatever the danger, they cheerfully incurred it; not now and then only, but constantly. And they, who had exposed their lives for the apostle, exposed them also for the church. The words may bear another sense. By "the church in their house," may be meant their piously regulated family. A church is a select body of Christians, meeting often for the worship of God and for religious instruction, which cheerfully subjects itself to religious order and discipline, and maintains peace and mutual affection. Such is a pious family, under suitable regulation. Such may Paul have regarded the family of Aquila, and greeted under the figure of a church. By a family of this description, exhibiting religion in the domestic sanctuary in one of its most lovely and persuasive attitudes, Aquila and Priscilla, in an important sense, were helpers of Paul in Christ. But it is time to improve our subject.

1. The sketch we have taken of Aquila and Priscilla presents to us a bright example of christian duty in private life. As heads of families, let us be anxious to copy it. They appear truly lovely by the invariable harmony which subsisted between them. Too much care cannot be taken to preserve perfect peace at the head of the family. "Study the things which make for peace," says the apostle. Study, consider, devise, the best means to that end. It is an object worthy of much and daily

reflection; and for this there should be bearing and forbearing; kindness studiously shown, and studiously returned. And further, it is of great importance, that the heads of a family be united in judgment, and views, and counsels, in worthy objects to be obtained, and in the best means for obtaining them. When parents have one plan in their family, and execute it as with a single spirit, uniting their strength, every good thing seems easily accomplished. The children are instructed and governed, and kept affectionate to each other, and dutiful to their parents, and peace and happiness reign throughout the little community. Let me beseech my hearers,

2. To imitate these exemplary persons in extending help and encouragement to their minister. Such sacrifices as were rendered to Paul, by these primitive converts in exposing their lives for his sake, are not needed or desired in these times of peaceful enjoyment of our religion; but you may greatly aid him, in his anxious and eventful labours, by your affectionate hospitality, your constant and exemplary attendance on his ministry, by your pious conversation, and by your prayers. There will be no occasion to complain of any want of affectionate hospitality. He is much affected by the kindness and feeling, with which he is received in his visits to your houses, and returns wishing he could make them much oftener. In these, he is sometimes rejoiced to get near to you in spiritual conversation, and indulges the hope that hints are dropped, which prove more effectual, than the more general in-

structions from the pulpit. Hints, thus given, he has learned with joy many years afterward, have been good seed in a good and honest heart, bearing fruit of promise to everlasting life.

Much also, my friends, may you help your minister by your constant attendance on his public ministrations. It gives him courage and hope, to see a full and listening house; it awakens his powers into some degree of energy, and his affections to pathos. And you act on each other, producing a deeper sense of the weighty truths which you hear. Much may you aid your minister by your pious conversation. There should be much of this in the family. As heads of it, you should stir up each others' minds by way of remembrance, and be often dropping seasonable thoughts in the presence of your children, "line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little," as they can bear it, enough to shew that your hearts feel a deep interest in your own, and their salvation. Increase the power of your minister to do them good, by inspiring them with love and respect for his person and ministry. Also, let your devout conversation appear beyond the limits of your own family; let its good influence be diffused around you not ostentatiously—not controversially—not reproachfully to persons of sentiments or of churches different from your own—but with true humility, candor, and kindness.

Once more.

3. Regard the commended character of these primitive disciples in what is said of "the church in their

house." To this end, let your children be dedicated to God. Let them be instructed in the nature of baptism, and the Lord's supper. In every respect, let them be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let them be subjected to christian discipline, and maintain from early years a blameless conversation. Then, figuratively at least, your pastor may greet the church that is in your house, and with hope and joy regard it as a nursery for the visible church on earth, and, which is far more important, for the spotless church in glory.

# SERMON XVII.

## DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

LUKE xxiii: 42, 43.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

There is something surprising and touching in these words, the humble and pathetic petition of the dying malefactor, and the princely assurance of the crucified Jesus; a wretched man dying for his crimes, and yet assured of passing immediately to paradise, the place of happy departed spirits, there to be with his Saviour. Precious passage in the blessed gospel! How many, whose sins are of a scarlet color, and a crimson die, upon true repentance and faith in Christ, has this passage encouraged to hope; but how many, alas! has it emboldened to presume! Let us all beware of perverting this historical fact, to delay in religion, hoping to find, at the last hour, that mercy, which was declared to the crucified thief.

The passage will naturally call up the subject of a death-bed repentance. There are no scenes upon earth, so awful and interesting, as the chambers of the dying; and no duty of a pastor so responsible, and difficult, as that which he renders to those, who are shortly to appear before their Judge. In some cases, his course is clear, and his task easy and delightful; where the past life of habitual piety is a ready voucher, that the peace, the hope, the joy he witnesses, flow from principles and habits, which have sustained the shock of temptation, in years of health and prosperity.—In other cases, his course is more doubtful and obscure. If there be hope, peace, joy, affections apparently religious, and grief and sorrow for a life spent in forgetfulness of God, and disobedience to his will, how gladly would the anxious and affectionate pastor hail these, as the undoubted signs of transformation of character. His sympathy with a dying fellow-creature, and with the anxious friends, that weep about his bed, influence his mind to a favorable judgment. But there is too much at risk with the dying, and with the living, to speak peace on doubtful grounds, and on evidence of repentance and of faith, which have had no season of health, and prosperity, and temptation, to test their solidity and genuineness. For the dying, in such circumstances, he will not despair; nor of the sincerity and reality of his repentance will he dare to be confident; but will submit him to his upright and infallible Judge. It is often distressing to see, on what slight grounds surviving friends, who think little of the nature

of religion, comfort themselves concerning the dead. If they have been heard praying for mercy, or lamenting their sinful and wasted lives, or warning others not to do as they have done, they are greatly comforted. If they "die and make no sign," they are greatly distressed; and what is still more lamentable, imagining those few favorable signs are evidence of repentance, encourage themselves to continue in sin and impenitence, hoping, that what is necessary for themselves may be done also in a dying hour. These things being so, I have thought it incumbent on me to turn our thoughts to the subject, with great seriousness and concern, and to give my beloved hearers the result of my reflections on the important subject. And may God of his infinite mercy bless what shall be said, particularly to all delaying the work of repentance. My plan is,

I. To examine the case of the penitent malefactor on the cross, to see if it afford any encouragement to hope for an effectual repentance in the hour of death.

II. To call your attention to several considerations, which show the extreme rashness and guilt of deferring repentance to a dying hour.

I. To examine the case of the penitent malefactor on the cross, to see if it afford any encouragement to hope for an effectual repentance in the hour of death.

And here I remark,

1. That it is by no means certain, that the penitence of the malefactor took place upon the cross. It is evident he knew our Lord's character, for he bore testimony to his innocence. He may often have heard him

preach, and may have witnessed his miracles, and been convinced that he was the Messiah. He may even have been prevailingly a good man before this season, and his untimely end may have been occasioned by a single act of transgression of which he had repented in dust and ashes, into which he may have been betrayed, not by habitual wickedness, but the strength of a single, sudden, and violent temptation. There are instances in the scriptures, of good men, who have fallen, through sudden and great temptation, and have soon risen again. It may have been, in those times of Jewish commotion, for some political offence of robbery and aggression, involving no absolute abandonment of principle, that he was condemned. Then no man may encourage himself in sin from this example, as if it were an unquestionable instance of a late repentance.

2. But grant, that the malefactor on the cross is really an instance of sudden and late repentance, (and there is nothing in the narrative which absolutely concludes against it,) yet still, be it remembered, that it is a bare example, not confirmed by any promise, in other parts of the Bible. It is a single example, without a parallel in the whole word of God. Yes, the scriptures are a history of more than four thousand years; and not another instance is there, if this be one, recorded, of a person accepted upon a death-bed repentance. Surely, then, it should rather operate to arrest, than encourage sinners in their delay. Especially, when you consider the extraordinary conjunction of circumstances, in which the dying thief was placed; witnessing the

preternatural darkness at the crucifixion; and suffering under the eye of the Saviour, whom, by some means or other, he knew to be the Messiah; circumstances never to occur in the case of any other delaying sinner. Can this instance of late repentance, if it be one, in circumstances so affecting and awful, encourage sinners to hope for repentance, in ordinary circumstances, at the last hour? Besides, it was an age of miracles, a day and occasion of great miracles. The Lord of life and glory was dying for the salvation of the world; the sun hid his face at the sight; the rocks were just ready to burst, and the veil of the temple to be rent, and the graves of the dead to be opened. While such miracles were performing in the natural world, to indicate the dignity of the sufferer, it was not strange, that a miracle should be performed in the moral world, to exemplify the high end of those sufferings, the salvation of sinners; and that a dying malefactor, through the great grace given him, should even suddenly, if it were so, exercise a deep and effectual repentance, and shew forth a faith in the Saviour, far transcending even that of the twelve. But is a miracle of mercy, in such circumstances, and for such an end, to be drawn into an example of what is to be hoped for by sinners, in ordinary circumstances, and who also have wasted a life of christian privileges in impenitence and unbelief? It is presumption in any delaying sinner to make such an use of the extraordinary pardon, conferred upon the malefactor on the cross. If dispensed to an unquestionable subject of late repentance, it affords no encourage-

ment in ordinary circumstances to delay, in hope of the efficacy of a death-bed repentance.

I now proceed,

II. To call your attention to several considerations, which show the extreme rashness and guilt of deferring repentance to a death-bed. And,

1. It is a startling consideration, too little thought of by many, delaying the work of life to that, vainly imagined, more convenient season, yet which can be denied by none, that there is, in cases innumerable, no opportunity whatever given for a death-bed repentance. Death is often as sudden as the lightning's flash. No man can conjecture the time, the manner, nor the means. Our breath is in God's hands. In the earthly house of this our tabernacle, we are tenants at will; and may be ejected, with or without warning; by violence or disease; sleeping or waking; performing or neglecting our work. Multitudes are taken away, not only in the midst of their days, but in the midst of their sins. The Israelites perished with the flesh, for which they lusted in their mouths; and Julian, if historians speak truth, with blasphemy on his lips. For all such, clearly, there is no opportunity whatsoever for repentance.—"But as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are they snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." The church of England, in their liturgy, pray to be kept from sudden death. To the impenitent, certainly, it shuts out all glimmer of hope. But,

Let me further remark, that it is not sudden death

alone, that prevents all opportunity of a death-bed repentance. For many diseases seize the head and stupify or distract the brain, and entirely disqualify the unhappy subject for any rational thought or action, and of course render repentance, in such circumstances, impossible. And it is a dreadful thought, that this distraction of mind is frequently brought upon sinners by their vices, from frequent instances of delirium, voluntarily brought upon themselves, they often sink into that which is habitual, and the day of grace is over, before the day of life is ended. If, however, there should not be a perfect loss of reason on the death-bed, still, in most cases, it is but a miserable time for repentance. Extreme bodily weakness, and the failure of natural spirits and resolution, with racking pains, blunt and enfeeble men's minds, if they do not distract them. In such circumstances, a man is scarcely thought capable of disposing of his estate, and is he capable of securing, by one great effort of faith and repentance, durable riches, glory, honour and immortality? Which brings me to a

2d Consideration, which should discourage the hope of death-bed repentance. This arises from the nature of repentance itself, which is such as to render it highly improbable that it should be accomplished on a death-bed. Now what is repentance? It is a great change in the soul, by which old things are done away, and all things become new. It is the breaking up of evil habits and bad affections, which have long reigned in the soul, till they have become like the skin of the

Ethiopian, and the spots of the leopard; and in the room of these, it is the introduction of new and opposite habits. Now is this a thing so easily done, that a single hour of fainting, dying life will suffice for it? Can all our evil habits be changed into their opposites, as in a moment of time, when we know how difficult it is to change any habit at all? Can we resign our sinful prejudices in a moment, and see with new eyes, and in a new direction, and clearly at once? Can our old tastes and aversions, loves and hatreds, pleasures and affections, be given up at a volition, even if convinced that they ought to be, and that it is ruin to retain them? These questions seem to me to answer themselves. For how can we imagine, that a tree which has been always barren, should bring forth good fruit, when it is cutting down; or that a weak, infirm person, of disturbed mind and disabled faculties, should build that in three days, which others in health, and with their utmost ability and diligence, find difficult enough to be done in forty years? We are constrained to say in the words of our blessed Saviour, "With men it is impossible; but all things are possible with God." Him we must not limit, neither must a sinner presume, after he has thrown away life upon his sins, that God will work a miracle for his salvation at his last hour. But,

3. It may be said, there is sometimes to be seen in the expiring moments of life a great appearance of right views and feelings, of which little or nothing had been seen before: and why may not these be esteemed a true, though late, repentance?

God forbid, that we should undervalue these appearances: only let not anxious ministers, and friends, and especially impenitent men, look upon them with unreasonable encouragement and hope. Now it is not strange, that men should be serious when they come to die, if they have never been serious before. It would argue brutish stupidity, if it were otherwise, especially with persons who have had the advantage of christian instruction, and know that after death is the judgment, when every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or bad. At the moment when men feel themselves dying, it is not strange, that they should be willing to relinquish their sins, and wish by repentance to cast them from them, as men in a sinking vessel cast overboard their treasures, sacrificing what they still love, to save life. Nor is it strange, that the soul, in its extremity, should reach after God, conscious that he alone can save from what is most dreadful, and translate to what is most glorious. Knowing too, that without holiness, no man can see the Lord, it is not strange, that the soul, in the dying extremity, should breathe an earnest desire after holiness. But the great question here is, whether there be any real hatred of sin, or only a hatred of the misery to which it leads; whether there be any real love to God and holiness, or only a passionate desire of that salvation, which they only can confer: in fact, whether, if death should release his trembling victim, and he should again return to the ordinary temptations of life, he would not fall into sin as before, and live as

far from God and holiness as ever. This is the more to be feared, I remark,

4. Because religious impressions are often made and soon lost, and seeming changes take place, which are shown to be ineffectual by a subsequent return to sin. I should think, that the most insensible might look back and recollect many impressions and changes of this nature in their past lives, and the fruitless result of them. In sickness, in storms at sea, in tempests of wind and of lightning on the land, under affecting mercies, in distressing afflictions, or struck by awakening discourses from the pulpit, they have been deeply impressed, death seemed near, and eternity ready to open upon them; and the necessity of religion appeared with strong conviction, and in a clear light. But the scene changed, and their impressions vanished. At least, with some this has been the case, again and again; and their imagined goodness was but "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it hath gone away." If then, when death and reality comes, and the like impressions are made, and seeming changes take place, how can they, or others, with confidence pronounce it a safe and effectual repentance. These appearances have been often deceptive, and it is impossible for man to tell that they are now the signs of true repentance.

Other considerations might be urged, but I forbear.

I trust enough has been said, to show the extreme rashness and guilt of deferring repentance to the last hours of life, that there is nothing in the case of the

malefactor on the cross, to encourage delay; that it is a startling consideration, that there may be no opportunity whatever for a death-bed repentance, because of sudden death, or a frenzied state of the mind; that such is the nature of repentance, as a great change in the soul, a change of its thoughts, views, prejudices, feelings, affections, and habits, that it seems impossible, except by miracle, to be a sudden change, and that also in a moment, when body and mind are oppressed with weakness, terror, and anguish; and that when it seems to take place on a death-bed, there is great reason to fear, that, like impressions which have been ineffectually made by dangers, afflictions, and other means, the appearance may be deceptive.

In view of all that has been said, let me ask, will any of you, who are conscious that you have neglected religion hitherto in the hope of a more convenient opportunity, like Felix, or with the secret self-flattery of a death-bed repentance, neglect it any longer? Consider what repentance is; it is the fullest and clearest act of the heart and soul, choosing that which is good, and refusing forever that which is evil. It is not a thing that you can grasp as a sudden expedient in extremity, but a reflecting entrance into a holy state of living, and a resting in it of choice; it is the settlement of the soul, with full satisfaction, in the abhorrence of sin, and the love of holiness, in utter aversion to vanity and sensuality, and delight in heavenly purity of heart and life. So great, and rational, and transforming a

work requires all of time and vigour, that you have remaining. Begin then, at once, this momentous work, in devout and humble reliance on the grace of God, for which you may now hope, but which you provoke him to withhold, if you delay to a dying bed. Give not your strength to sin and the world, but devote it to God and heaven. "It is foolish," says an old writer, "when the ship is sound, the pilot well, the mariners strong, and the gale favorable, to lie idle in the road, losing such seasonable weather; and when the ship leaks, the pilot is sick, the mariners faint, the storms boisterous, and the seas a mountain of raging waves, to launch forth on a long voyage, into a far country. Yet," he adds, "such is the skill of death-bed repenters, who neglect religion, in the soundness of health, and perfect use of reason, and yet feed themselves with the persuasion, that, when they are disordered with sickness, their understanding clouded, and their bodies and souls tormented with the pangs of a mortal disease, they will begin to think of the weightier matters, and become sudden saints, when they are scarcely able to conduct themselves as reasonable creatures." Save yourselves, my friends, from such folly and guilt. Loiter not in seed-time, and hope to sow, when others reap. Slumber not out the day, and then think to begin your journey, when the evening is come, and the light fails you. Live not a life of sin, and then hope for an eternity of purity and joy.

May God grant you his blessed spirit to convince

you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and seasonably and early may you obtain that repentance which is unto salvation, that you may be happily saved from the perils and pangs of that repentance, which comes too late.

# SERMON XVIII.

## SONG OF ANGELS AT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

LUKE ii. 14.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

This day is the reputed birth day of the world's Saviour. Millions of our fellow Christians are this morning engaged in celebrating the great event with religious honors. The Roman and English churches celebrate it with great external pomp and ceremony; with splendid ornaments they deck the sanctuary; with loud anthems and animated chants and pealing organs, they testify their joy and gratitude to God on the great occasion, and with feasting and mutual gifts their sympathy and fellowship with one another. But the celebration is not confined to those ancient churches. Most of those who dissent from them in ceremonies and doc-

trines, will gratefully distinguish the day, occurring as it does on the sabbath, and will pour forth their songs of thanksgiving to God for his unspeakable gift. And what event is there in all time, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things, which should excite a deeper interest or a livelier joy? It has a bearing on the highest welfare of all the generations of men; on their peace and happiness through time, and on their joy and glory in eternity. The great event was held in lively expectation for four thousand years. Patriarchs foresaw it in vision; prophets foretold it; types prefigured it; the legal economy shadowed it forth; prophets and kings and righteous men desired to see it, but died without the sight. But at length the day drew near which was to give the long expected Saviour to the world. The pious were waiting to see the consolation of Israel; him whom the prophet Haggai described as "the desire of all nations." And it is remarkable, that the expectation of an illustrious prince was not confined to the Jewish nation, who held in their hands the oracles, which predicted his coming. Probably those sacred scriptures, which had been translated into Greek three hundred years before Christ, had circulated in Egypt and other nations, and had served to excite this expectation, and Jews, scattered in different nations, had confirmed it. I remarked, the day at length drew near, and heavenly portents began to announce its approach. The devout Simeon had it revealed to him that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." The angel Gabriel appeared to Zach-

arias, a priest of eminent piety, and stood on the right side of the altar, as he was burning incense in the temple, and the people were praying without. The angel spake kindly to compose his terrified mind; announced to him that his barren and aged wife should have a son; that many should rejoice in the event; that he should be great in the sight of the Lord, a Nazarite, and filled with the holy Ghost; should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord, and should be that prophet, who, in the spirit of Elias, should go before and usher in the Messiah. These great things were almost too much for him at once to believe; and as a reproof for his doubts and a confirmation of his faith, he was struck dumb, till all those things should be performed, as they were in their time and order, and he recovered his speech to glorify God, and was filled with the holy ghost to utter a prophetical hymn, descriptive of the Messiah, then ready to appear as "the day-spring from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The same angel, whose name, *Gabriel*, signifies *the power of God*, and who is described as of the highest order of angelic spirits, standing in the presence of God, six months after his appearance to Zacharias, appeared to the virgin Mary, to announce to her, that she, in a miraculous manner, should become "the mother of Jesus; that he should be great, and called the son of the Highest; and that the Lord God should give unto him the throne of his father David; and that he should

reign over the house of Jacob forever ; and that of his kingdom there should be no end."—But Mary was living in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, and Christ was to be born, according to the prophets, in Bethlehem of Judea. Mark, notwithstanding, how easily the Omnipotent can control circumstances to the exact accomplishment of his promises. A decree of Caesar Augustus at Rome, that all the world should be taxed, brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David, and there " she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn." And is it possible, that we behold the son of God in a manger ? The seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head ? The holy seed of Abraham and David, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed ?—Is this he, born in the humblest obscurity, of whom Isaiah predicted in those lofty terms—" Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty Lord, the Father of the everlasting age, or of that dispensation which shall continue to the consummation of all things, the Prince of peace ?" Can this be he, " of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, from henceforth even forever ?" Yes, this is he ; and we need only remark, that " God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways." By the birth of his well-beloved son, in circumstances of earthly poverty and apparent meanness, he has poured contempt on all earthly riches

and grandeur, things sought after by men with so much eagerness, and displayed with so much pride. It teaches us, in the most affecting way, that true greatness is to be found, not in external splendor, but in intellectual and moral qualities, in holy wisdom and benevolence, in god-like grace and compassion.

But think not that an event, which attracts so little attention from men, can pass unnoticed by beings more enlightened, and who comprehend something of the infinite blessings, which are to result from it. The blessed and everlasting Father looks with complacency upon the babe in Bethlehem, and saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." All heaven is moved at the great event. The countless host of angels wing their downward flight to contemplate the humiliation of their Lord; to witness the commencement of his sufferings, and to anticipate the glory which shall follow. For, says the apostle Peter, "The angels desire to look into these things." Let us for a few moments contemplate this scene of angelic glory and joy, which was exhibited on the plains of Bethlehem, for our text is connected with it. It was yet in the dawn of the morning, and the world was generally wrapt in slumber.—Shepherds, however, were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. These men were selected to witness the glorious scene, and to be heaven-directed to visit the new-born Saviour, and to publish abroad what they had seen, and heard, and learned, perhaps on account of their innocence and piety; perhaps because they, like the apostles afterward chosen,

were in the humbler walks of life. "For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." To these humble shepherds suddenly there appeared an angelic being, and they were surrounded with preternatural light, for "the glory of the Lord shone around about them." It is not surprising, that they were sore afraid. But this glorious being from another world composed their minds, with gentle and persuasive words, saying, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." And he gave them a particular sign, by which, if they then went to Bethlehem, they might find him, "that he was lying in a manger."

Thus the angel having announced the nativity of the Saviour, the shepherds suddenly saw a multitude of the heavenly host, confirming the tidings, testifying their joy and admiration at the great event, and praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good will towards men." "Never was hymn of praise so significant, and so expressive of its subject; and we scarcely need any other proof but the words themselves, that it was of heavenly origin.—It contains in one sentence, as in a germ, what was

soon developed in the whole gospel, as taught by Christ and the apostles; the superlative goodness of God, which now began to shine with brighter lustre than ever, in causing his own and only son to be born into a sinful world, to enlighten, reform, and save it; and also the blessed fruits of his ministry, in promoting peace on earth, and good will towards men." * This rejoicing acclamation of the angels, strongly represents the benevolence of those heavenly spirits, and perhaps this is intended to be expressed in those words, "good will toward men," as well as the good will of God, and of the new-born Saviour. These loud acclamations of joy and praise were not on their own account, but upon that of men. If this benevolence of God, in the gift and birth of his son into the world, occasioned such rapture in angels, a Saviour not for them, but for us, what grateful and rapturous emotions should we feel, who are so deeply and personally interested in the great event.

Such, my friends, was the earliest celebration of the nativity of our blessed Lord, by the angels. Such praise, and joy, were never before witnessed in our world, except when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," at the birth of creation.

This concise and sublime hymn suggests important thoughts to be cherished by us at all times, and with special fervor on this joyful anniversary. We learn from it, what we learn also from the prophecies of the Old Testament and the records of the New,

* Goadby.

I. That the great object of the birth of Christ into the world, is peace—"Peace on earth; good will toward men," sang the angels. With this delightful sentiment, there is a most remarkable correspondence in all the leading predictions of the Messiah, in the Old Testament. As in the 72d Psalm—"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." In that most exact and characteristic prophecy of Christ, in the 9th of Isaiah, already mentioned, he is called the prince of peace; and it is added, "of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end." And the same prophet, in another place, in language which the New Testament applies to the gospel of Christ, exclaims—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him, that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." The same character of Christ, and of his kingdom, is given in those beautiful and highly figurative expressions of the same prophet: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den." No metaphorical expressions can be more adapted to express the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ, than these. They imply a mighty change from a savage, cruel and noxious disposition, to a mild, innocuous, and loving one. We need

but turn to the New Testament, and observe the whole spirit of our Lord's instruction and example, and that of his apostles, to perceive that they are adapted to bring men to that state of temper and character, which is here so forcibly described. In no other system of truth and morals, which sages ever taught, were men so powerfully urged to become entire new creatures; to change, as it were, their very natures. To "put off, concerning their former conversation, the old man with his deeds, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In the words of Paul, "from living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, to become gentle, shewing meekness to all men," is a change as great indeed, as if the ravenous wolf were to become mild, and feed by the side of the tender lamb, without hurting it; as if the fierce leopard should lie quietly down with the kid. This specimen of prophecy concerning Christ, in the Old Testament, and of the doctrine and precept of the new, without farther quotation, is sufficient to show, that one great design of the birth of the son of God into the world, was to reduce mankind to a state of peace with each other; to restrain those lusts and passions, "from whence come wars and fightings," and so to change and ameliorate their dispositions, as to make them happy in each other.

II. But there is a higher sense of these words of the angel's song, "peace on earth," which I proceed

to mention; peace between God, and sinful and rebellious men. As sinners, we are alienated from God, by wicked works; we have broken his law and are exposed to its penalty which is death. Christ came on the blessed, but difficult errand, to reconcile us to God; to bring us into a state of peace and favor with him: and "his favor is life, and his loving kindness is better than life." It cannot be very necessary that I should produce a labored proof of this important point. You will attend to a few important texts: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" and again, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is wonderful language, equally declarative of the office of Christ, and of the great mercy of God. It speaks of sinners to be reconciled, not God. He looks upon them rushing from him into ruin, with infinite concern; and sends his son to conciliate and bring them back; and he stands, like the father of the prodigal, with extended arms to receive them. Let me add a few verses from the 5th of Romans: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also, we have access by faith into his grace or favor, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. These, and many other passages, show very conclusively that Christ is the great agent, and his gospel and death the appointed means, of bringing sinners into a state of reconciliation with God, and of everlasting blessedness.

But I forbear to enlarge on a point which stands proved throughout the gospel; which is evident from the various official titles which he bears as mediator, intercessor, and advocate; redeemer, propitiation, and sacrifice. I close with practical reflections.

We this day celebrate the nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And will he not look down from the excellent glory, into which he has been received, upon us, and upon the millions of our fellow-christians, to see with what sentiments and affections we do it? He will look with little regard upon mere external homage and splendor, and will listen with as little approbation to the hymns and anthems, uttered by the lips with the sweetest harmony, if the heart be not filled with peace "the peace of God which passeth understanding," and with the thoughts and sentiments of peace toward all mankind. Nothing will be so grateful to him, as to see accomplished in our hearts, the great object of his advent into our world. If, then, we would testify our homage to that blessed Saviour, who for us did not disdain to be laid in a manger, and to expire on a cross, let us from the heart echo back that sweet song of the angels, "peace on earth," and let this imply,

1. That we do all in our power to promote peace on earth. There is need enough of this. The earth has always been an aceldama, a field of blood. War has been called the natural state of man. Certain it is, that it has raged with almost ceaseless fury in all generations of men, and its desolations have been more calamitous and destructive than famine, pestilence, and every

other judgment, which an angry God hath ever sent upon a wicked world for its correction. It is time that the voice of the Prince of peace should be obediently heard; and that all his disciples and subjects, imbibing his spirit, should exert themselves in the holy cause of peace. The gospel has mitigated the horrors of war, and has perhaps rendered them somewhat less frequent than formerly. Let the friends of the gospel not rest from pleading the cause of peace, and from exerting their humble influence among christian and even pagan nations, till wars shall cease to the ends of the earth; and men shall, with one consent, "beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more." "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." But especially let us labor to promote the principles and sentiments of peace within our own nation. The national sentiment may be affected by a free expression of our disapprobation and horror of the crimes and miseries of war, and the fearful guilt of all those who are accessary to a needless one. A magnanimous and equitable policy, and the uniform love and pursuit of peace in this great and interesting nation, would have no small influence on other nations to the same ends.

But it is in vain to hope for national peace, unless its principles are with christian care and fidelity cherished in smaller communities, in each of the republics which are comprehended in our federal band, in towns and precincts, or parishes. As are the smaller communities, so will be the larger, of which they are consti-

tuted. This remark brings our duty, as disciples of the Prince of peace, home to our doors and bosoms. In the circle immediately around us, we must be men of peace, and cherish kind and friendly sentiments, and exhibit conciliatory and courteous manners, and each one give his personal endeavor to preserve a peaceful neighborhood, parish and town. In a word, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us, and all malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven us."

But there is a peace among men, more dear to the Prince of peace, than a civil peace; I mean an ecclesiastical peace; peace among the churches; peace among all the professed disciples of one common master, by whatever shades of opinion, or diversity of ceremonies they be distinguished, or human names they be called. These shades and this diversity are perhaps unavoidable in the present imperfect state. Nor are they of much consequence, if they be not made the occasion of uncharitable censures and bitter alienation. Indeed they may be improved as occasions of exercising, strengthening and brightening some of the sweetest virtues and graces of the christian character. Let them be so improved, if we would please our blessed master. It is time, that Christ be no longer wounded in the house of his friends; it is high time, that the Head be no longer pierced in the unchristian strife of the members. We must learn to receive one another, but not to doubtful disputation; to

judge one another less by opinions, and more by the graces of a christian temper, and the beauty of holiness. It is time, at least within the fold of Christ, that the happy scene be realized, which was predicted in those lofty and metaphorical passages of Isaiah, considered in the body of this discourse; when the wolf and the lamb, and the leopard and the kid, and the young lion and the fatling shall lie down quietly together; and a little child shall lead them. And when this is done, I remark in conclusion, that one great step is taken towards that peace with God, which is the highest and ultimate object of the birth, ministry and death of his blessed son. Yes, our common Father, with grief and anger, beholds the contentions among his human offspring. And so many of them, as imbibe the spirit of his son, and study the things which make for peace, are pleasing to him; and he will receive them to his special favor. Let us by this special means and every other way which the gospel prescribes, seek peace with our heavenly Father. By a deep repentance of our rebellion and sin, by a joyful acceptance of mercy proffered through that gracious Saviour, whose birth we this day celebrate, by a firm and indignant casting away of the weapons of our rebellion, and a joyful and grateful return to God, and peaceful and entire subjection to his authority, let us honor this memorable day. Then in the best sense and manner shall we sing, as angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Amen.

# SERMON XIX.

## CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

LUKE i. 78, 79.

The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

This is a part of that sacred hymn, which the enraptured Zacharias uttered with holy enthusiasm, at the birth of his son, John the Baptist. It was an inspired hymn; for the evangelist tells us "that he was filled with the holy Ghost, and prophesied." He glances an eye back through the Old Testament; notices what had been spoken by all the prophets, concerning the promised Messiah, and exults, that those predictions were now fulfilling, and that "God had raised up for them an horn of salvation, in the house of his servant David, to perform the mercy promised to their fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the

oath which he sware to Abraham." He rejoices in the spiritual nature of that kingdom, which the Messiah was to introduce, that "being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, they might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life." He exults also with holy joy and gratitude in the high honor of being himself the father of a child, "that should be called the prophet of the highest, and who should go before the face of the Messiah to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Let us make the sentiments of this grateful hymn our own, and catch some portion of the pious enthusiasm of the raptured prophet, on this anniversary of the birth of a Saviour; for unto us, as well as to the Jews, a child is born. Unto us a son is given; unto us, as well as to the descendants of Abraham and Israel, a Saviour is born, who is Christ the Lord. For he is a light to enlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel; the light of the world—"and whosoever followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

There is something unspeakably beautiful in hailing the infant Saviour, as the day-spring, the dawning of the gospel day; as the sun of righteousness was not yet quite risen, and there was to be a little space, be-

fore he should spread abroad his beams and illuminate the earth. The scriptures of both testaments delight to speak of the Saviour under the figure of light. And what is there so grand, and beautiful, and cheering, and life-giving, in all nature, as light? Light in nature is that wonderful and diffused blessing, by which we discern natural objects, ascertain their relations, and learn their uses; and likewise select our path, and avoid those dangers and difficulties, to which we should be otherwise exposed. It is then an apt and striking figure, to exhibit the Saviour, through whose instruction we discern moral objects, learn their relations, and ascertain their infinite importance; and under whose infallible guidance we may shun dangers of a fearful aspect, avoid difficulties and troubles, temporal and eternal, and find the way to everlasting life and glory.

In pursuing the subject suggested by the text, I shall point out several respects, in which Christ is eminently the light of the world; and then suggest what improvement we should make of this divine light.

I. Our first point will the more strikingly appear, if for a moment we consider, how imperfect and unsettled was the knowedge of men, on the most important subjects, before our Lord's advent. The light of nature on moral subjects was but a dim taper; although sufficient, if duly improved, to conduct men to an imperfect knowledge of God and their duties. His existence and some of his perfections are inscribed upon his works, in characters which all nations should

read. "There is no speech nor language," saith the psalmist, "where their voice is not heard. Their line hath gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And Paul speaks in still stronger language—"The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead—so that they are without excuse." He adds concerning the heathen, "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." This is a serious, but just reproach upon the great mass of mankind in all ages. For what dishonorable and unjust notions of the Deity have men entertained in those countries, which have not been favored with revelation! From false notions of the divine Being, have sprung those indecent, criminal, and even horrible rites, with which he has been worshipped. In many countries they have thought him capable of being appeased by human sacrifices, and parents have literally given to destruction the fruit of their bodies for the sins of their souls. Others have mingled their own blood with that of their sacrifices. Such, in brief, is a melancholly account of the superstitions of the heathen. Before the appearance of Christ, there were many precious additions to what of true knowledge had been derived from the light of nature, by direct revelation. Noah was a preacher of righteousness; Abraham a wandering preacher and prophet,

and an illustrious example of faith and piety. Moses was a faithful servant of the Lord, and led a nation by the hand in the way, in which they should go. And the prophets were, from time to time, as lights shining in a dark place. All these, borrowing their beams from the divine source of light, shone but faintly, and illuminated but a limited sphere. The pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, conducted but one nation, and that to temporal possessions. Even the Jews, such was their obstinacy, frequently ran into the idolatries of their neighbors. God in mercy recalled them, that he might not leave himself without witness in the world. And unto them were committed the lively oracles of God, to be a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path. Yet with respect to many points, which are objects of faith with us, the Jews themselves had but a very imperfect knowledge. A large and influential sect among them disbelieved the resurrection of the dead, the being of angels, and the existence of spirits or souls departed. The light, with which the Jews were peculiarly favored, was precious, and is, by us, to be highly prized. Yet it was very imperfect, compared with the light of the gospel; a morning star, to precede the day-spring, and to be a very humble type of the sun of righteousness, which was predicted, and expected to rise with healing in his wings. Such was the state of the Jews and Gentiles, as to religious knowledge at the birth of Christ.

But I hasten to specify a few important particulars, in which Christ is eminently the light of the world, and,

I. In the words of Paul, "He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; and this is a point of inexpressible importance to the world. The immortality of the soul was a subject of anxious inquiry among the heathen, but not of knowledge; a subject of faint hope and strong desire, with the wisest and best of them, but not of faith. There were a few arguments on which they loved to dwell, but they could not rise above their doubts. They rested the proof on these two arguments; the strong desire of immortality, implanted in the breast of good men, and the little regard which seems to be had to virtue and vice in this world, in the distribution of good and evil. In relation to the first, they argued that a benevolent Creator would not have implanted so strong a desire, so rational and pure a desire in the human breast, if he intended it should not be gratified. And in the latter argument, they observed that virtue is, in this world, often oppressed, and vice triumphant; and that therefore there must be another state to adjust these inequalities, to render due rewards to the good, and just punishments to the bad. These arguments, however forcible, could not produce a full conviction; as may be seen in their wisest sage, Socrates, who when dying, said to his friends—"I hope to go hence to good men; but of that I am not very confident; nor does it become any wise man to be positive that it will be so. I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, the living or the dead, God only knows." Thus doubtful was the very best and wisest of the

heathens, even when dying a martyr for what he believed to be truth. Cicero wrote largely on the subject, but with many doubts ingenuously confessed, calling his treatise only a surmise or conjecture of another state after this life. Of the resurrection of the body they had not the least idea. And so new was the idea to their minds, when suggested by Paul preaching, to the Athenians, Jesus and the resurrection, that he seemed to them a setter forth of strange gods.—Nor were the Jews much less in the dark with respect to these momentous subjects. As a nation, they more generally than any other, entertained the opinion that there would be another state of existence for men. But the subject is sparingly alluded to in the old testament. Job, David, Daniel, expressed their hope and confidence in a future state, in which men should be judged, employed, and rewarded. But they did not dwell on the subject. It appears only in a few scattered passages. The prophets lifted up the vail of futurity, as it respects this world, and declared events and the destinies of kingdoms for thousands of years to come, but drew not aside the thick vail which hangs between this and a future world. This was left for the Messiah to do. And this he has done in a manner most clear and incontestible, so as to leave not a reasonable shadow of doubt as to a future state, a state deeply and awfully interesting, interminable in its duration, blissful and glorious to the righteous, and portentous with gloom, and woe to the impenitent wicked. If the blessed Son of God had done no more, than to give assurance of a

future state, assurance of a state of retribution without end; our most fervent gratitude and thanks should have been rendered to God. It is this glorious doctrine, which presents the most weighty and awful motives to the human mind, to stir it up to the love and practise of piety and virtue, and to deter it from sin and irreligion. Who that receives the gospel with an humble and sincere faith, can think of sin as a light evil, or can be careless of his conduct and words, of his temper and affections, of his heart and life, which are to determine his future state to be a state of unutterable joy or woe? With the vail now drawn aside by the hand of the blessed Son of God, sent into the world for that purpose, who is there of us that will not gaze with intense interest on that glorious and blissful state, and cherish a hope of its endless joys as the most constant and wakeful passions of our souls? Who is there that will not spring forward with ardor to take upon him the yoke of Christ, and to bear his easy burden, in the hope of glory as his reward? Who will not cheerfully suffer for Christ, that he may be permitted to reign with him, and have a part in that inheritance which is incorruptible and unfading? But I remark,

II. That Christ is eminently the light of the world by other doctrines which he taught. Time will not permit a very extensive enumeration. He teacheth us our distance from God as sinners, and also the means of access to him, and the way in which his mercy may be obtained. He shows a fountain open to wash away moral pollution; a method of deliverance from the

shameful and galling bondage of sin, and how we may be vindicated into the liberties of the sons of God. While he reveals a blessed immortality, and opens to view a bright prospect of heavenly glory, he at the same time marks out the path to it so plainly, that the humblest traveller may not mistake it. Faith is taught by our blessed Lord as essential to salvation. The nature of this faith is well set forth in the gospel; not as a cold speculation, but as a living principle. It is a cordial belief in Christ as the great teacher, intercessor, and king; esteeming it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners; reverencing him as the son of the living God and worthy of all obedience; and esteeming him able to save to the uttermost.

He, who is the light of the world, teaches also the necessity of repentance. He would not have us imagine, that there is a charm in professedly receiving him as our Saviour, which will secure our salvation, except there be a thorough moral change in the sinful heart. And that change is repentance. His fore-runner taught the necessity of repentance and illustrated its nature, as a forsaking, each one of his particular besetting sins, the thorough reformation of heart and life. Christ himself commenced his preaching in the same manner. "Repent, said he and believe the gospel." And again, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." There may be faith, so far as to receive the gospel as true, and Christ as the Son of God, without repentance. But such faith, the scriptures represent as dead, and far

from saving. That is true faith and an effectual repentance, which infuses spiritual life into the soul, which reforms the outward conduct, and purifies the affections, and sanctifies those recesses of the heart, which no eye but the divine can survey. It is another sweet and cheering truth, which our blessed Lord teaches, that in the production of this spiritual life, the influence of the divine spirit is afforded. That the feeble creature is not left to itself "in working out its salvation, but that God worketh in it to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and that he graciously listens to the prayer of an anxious soul, and giveth the holy spirit as freely as men give good things to their children. But I hasten to remark,

III. That Christ is eminently the light of the world, by those holy precepts which he has given in the gospel. It was truly said of him by his enemies—"Never man spake like this man." Never was matter so new, so excellent, so searching, uttered before, nor in words so concise and clear. He explained, and enlarged, and perfected the law of nature, and the moral law of Moses, adding precepts and prohibitions of greater perfection and extent; and relieving those laws from the corrupt glosses which had perverted them. He forbade polygamy, and divorce, except from a criminal cause, and likewise revenge, which the heathen thought noble, and the Jews justifiable. Besides, there is a spirituality which breathes in his precepts, not found in the laws of Moses. The laws of Moses regulate the outward man; those of Christ the inward too. He

emphatically required truth in the inward parts; in the thoughts, the desires, the intentions of the heart, although they should never be manifested in action he arraigns and judges. Not he who sheds the blood of a fellow creature alone is a murderer, but he who desires it. His doctrine is, that whosoever indulges malice, and lust in his heart is a transgressor of the sixth and seventh commandments.

I observe farther, that Christ has given some new precepts, such as became a most wise and benevolent mind; such as the world thought strange, and such as the maxims of a corrupt and wicked world still contravene. "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Christ greatly extended the bounds of neighborhood, and brotherhood; and, according to his law, all the children of Adam, the numerous branches of one great family, are required to lay aside their national and individual prejudices and to feel and exercise mutual charity.

This copious theme, which is however only touched upon rather than exhausted, has left me but a few moments to say what improvement we should make of this divine light.

When we look to the plains of Bethlehem, and see what heavenly joy was manifested at the birth of a Saviour, angels exulting in the wonderful mercy of God, not to themselves but to men; when we look to the city of David, and behold the rejoicing shepherds with wonder, contemplating the holy infant, and wise men from

the east, guided by a preternatural star, bowing before him with reverence, and presenting their offerings; when we see the aged Simeon in the temple, embracing the infant Saviour, and asking leave to die, since he had seen the salvation of God, prepared before the face of all people "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel; it becomes our grateful duty with Zachariah, in the text, to "rejoice in the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring on from high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Let us rejoice, that there is peace on earth, and good will to men; and responsive to the angelic chorus, let us ascribe glory to God in the highest; and from our inmost souls, give thanks to God for his unspeakable gift.

Has the day-spring from on high visited us? Then it is our solemn and responsible duty to take good heed to this heavenly light. It shines with undiminished brightness in the gospel; it shines to bring to our astonished view other worlds than this, and to reveal to us the interesting truth that we are to exist beyond the grave; it shines to reveal to us the path of glory, honor, and a joyful immortality. Our duty is to receive and improve this light to the grand end for which it has been given; to study the gospel with daily care and diligence, to know what are those precious doctrines which it reveals; and what are those pure and sanctifying precepts which it commands for the regulation of our lives. It is not a light thing, that such a treasure of truth and

such a guide to salvation is in our hands. If we neglect it, fearful will be our responsibility.

But knowledge of the gospel is not enough. To hail the day-spring with joy, and to behold the sun of righteousness rising and risen is not sufficient; it is not suitably to improve it. "We must walk as children of the light, and of the day." We must obey the gospel; deny ourselves with inflexible resolution what it forbids, and perform with indefatigable zeal and perseverance what it demands, and suffer with unconquerable patience whatever may be laid upon us for the trial of our faith and fidelity. This it is to improve the light which has been given us.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe. Amen.

# SERMON XX.

## THANKSGIVING.

(Preached on the day of the annual Thanksgiving in 1819.)

I. Chronicles, xxix. 13.

Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

In the chapter, with which our text is connected, are recorded the death of the devout monarch and psalmist of Israel, and some of the latest acts of his life. His piety, gratitude, and humility appear in these acts, in a most striking light. After God had given him peace on every side, and had established the kingdom in his hand, and settled the succession in his son Solomon, it became an earnest wish of David, to close his reign and life by a memorable act of piety: to build a temble at Jerusalem. He proposed the great design to the prophet; but, though it pleased God to approve, and to commend him, that it was in his heart to build

him a house, the execution of the pious enterprise was reserved for the peaceful reign of his son. David, however, made great preparations for the work; appropriated, from his own resources, what would be equivalent to nearly fifty millions of our money, to its accomplishment, and excited the friends and opulent men of his kingdom, to give liberally after his own example. He seems, at last, to have been astonished at what had been done, and deeply penetrated with pious gratitude, for what both he and his people had been enabled to contribute to this pious object. To God, he gives all the praise; acknowledges that it was his own, which they rendered to Him; that all their riches had been but the mercies bestowed upon them, in His Providence. In the presence of the congregation, he uttered the deep emotions of his pious heart, in the following effusion of praise and thanksgiving—"Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and earth is thine! thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." Then follows our text—"Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name."

This sublime hymn was originally adapted to the circumstances of David and Israel; but the senti-

ments are at all times just, and become the hearts and lips of every people. It is an ardent acknowledgment of the greatness, the perfections, the providence, the government, the mercy, and bounty of the great Creator. O that we may this day feel much of the grateful, joyful spirit of the holy psalmist, in this song; and when we shall have indulged, for a few moments, a train of thought naturally arising from it, let us join with the choir at least in our hearts, while they repeat the sentiment, in the strains of our best anthems.

Let us, with David, take a view of some of the many mercies of God, which should animate us to the duty of praise and thanksgiving, and with that order, which the extent of the subject admits, consider,

I. The display of his goodness in creation, and the ways of his providence.

II. Some of his many mercies to this Commonwealth.

III. Some of the benefits of the past year; and —what is never to be forgotten, nor omitted in our thankgiving,—

IV. The mercy of the Gospel.

For a moment we are to consider,

I. The display of God's goodness in creation, and in the ways of his providence.

We are very incompetent judges, it must be confessed, on a subject which is boundless, and most of which is entirely beyond our research. But so far as we can search out the works of God, his goodness appears most illustriously. The earth is full of his goodness—so is

this great and wide sea. The numberless living creatures, which people the air, the earth, and the waters, whatever be the term of their life, seem made to enjoy divine bounty. The meanest insect is constituted with organs, adapted to minister to its pleasures. The human frame is a little world of wonders. It cannot be examined, and its parts understood, without a devout admiration of the hand which formed it. Examine the arm; and observe the ease, and use, and grace of its motions, single and combined. Examine the hand; you see nothing about it superfluous, nothing deficient; and of what delicate and important uses is it capable: The eye; we could not behold it without delightful astonishment, if it were not so common an object.— How complex and delicate in its parts; how comprehensive and grand in its power! The beauties of the earth, the sublimities of the heavens, it ushers into the mind. We grow familiar with the objects of vision, and less sensible to its pleasures. But let a man born blind, by the operation of the oculist, be brought to see, and he will be utterly unable to tell his delightful amazement. Every thing, my friends, is wonderful in the human frame; and the more we know of its mechanism, the more shall we discover the divine wisdom and goodness in its construction, and the more ready shall we be to exclaim with the psalmist, "I will praise thee O Lord, for I am wonderfully made and curiously wrought."

Let me remark farther. If the great Creator appears thus good in his works below, from analogy we may

confidently conclude him to be infinitely good throughout creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God." At this vast distance from those shining orbs, we behold them with awe and delight; but could we survey them at hand, new wonders would burst upon our eyes. What orders of being people those larger and brighter orbs, or what happiness they enjoy, we can only conjecture. But we have every reason to believe that the works of God every where display his goodness, as well as his power; and it is the duty of all intelligent beings to praise their good and great Creator.

Under this general head, I add, that the ways of Providence form another just claim to our grateful praise. The same power is necessary to sustain, as to create. What confusion and desolation would instantly spread through creation, if the divine hand was not constantly employed in wheeling and balancing the mighty orbs. If, also, the divine care was not constantly exercised in feeding every living thing, what misery and destruction would be instantly experienced! It becomes us then, this day, to unite in paying our humble adoration and praise to the great Parent of the world, for the display of his goodness in the works of creation, and the ways of his providence. But we shall see something farther of the goodness of God's providence, under the remaining heads of our discourse.—Let us, therefore, proceed to consider,

II. Some of his many mercies to this Commonwealth, and to our country.

It ought never to be forgotten by the children, how their fathers were brought to this land "as on eagles' wings," and established here by a series of divine interpositions in their favor. The reader of our early history may perceive every thing but miracles. In the December of an inclement winter, they were cast upon the desert shore, destitute and sickly. Half of their number died; the little handful, which remained were debilitated, and surrounded by jealous and hostile Indians, yet were wonderfully preserved at peace with them by the smiles of Providence upon their wise and peaceful councils. It pleased God to raise up for them a sincere and immovable friend in the good chief after whose name the State had been called, as an acknowledgement of his friendship. This chief proved a shield to our fathers, till they were grown into a nation capable of contending with an extensive confederacy, conducted by a subtle and valiant leader. And then he rebuked kings for their sakes.—To pass by many instances of divine protection, how memorably was his mercy shown in the war for independence! The storm long hung over the metropolis, and at length it burst; and a feeble colony stood exposed to the fleets and armies of a powerful realm. But the hand of Providence was seen uniting the other colonies in the common cause. The solemn appeal to the world and heaven was made, and the act published, which gave independence to the nation. Heaven-guided, they placed Washington at the head of our armies, and the struggle was perfectly successful.

A season of great danger succeeded. Burdens, become necessary by a long war, were borne with little patience, and liberty was becoming licentious. Providence again smiled, and consolidated the country under the admirable form of our confederate government. It was of great importance, that this grand experiment of free government should go into operation under the best auspices; and Heaven granted that the new form of government should receive its first impulse from the paternal hand of Washington. Ah, those were golden days indeed! "We sat under our own vines and fig-trees, having none to hurt or make us afraid." Abroad, we were respected and courted by all, and partial to none. At home, we were happy; all classes prospered; the wilfully idle alone cried for bread. Agriculture and commerce, affording mutual support, flourished together. But how difficult is it for an individual, or a nation to bear prosperity. The mercies of Heaven were abused to vice and luxury; men in humble stations were aspiring—and the best men in high stations were misrepresented and maligned. Serious evils ensued. But at no time have we been forsaken of a kind Providence; and our chastisements, while we must confess they were just, have, we hope, wrought for our good. And now what nation upon earth has had equal claims upon its gratitude for divine mercies. How suddenly has our country grown to greatness! In two centuries, a handful of settlers have become ten millions, and have territory to accommodate an hundred millions; our coast is indented with harbours, and

our country intersected with rivers and canals. On the one hand, are opulent cities; on the other, fruitful fields and flourishing villages, and on all sides, numerous churches and enlightened pastors, schools to diffuse useful knowledge among all classes, higher institutions to teach the liberal sciences, and schools of the prophets, that we may not fail to have enlightened men in all the important stations in the community. These are singular favors bestowed on our country, and on this section of it in a distinguishing degree, which call for our grateful thanksgiving this day.

And here, in noticing the mercies of God to our State, I cannot refrain a remark on the peaceful manner in which a division of this Commonwealth has become an independent state. For almost two centuries, although geographically distinct, and parted by the intervening territory of another state, they have clung together, in political friendship. And the Eastern Section, with an anxious and lingering look has at length taken leave of us; and the Commonwealth, far from throwing any obstacles in their way, has dismissed them, like a tender parent, with its blessing and best wishes. I am now,

III. To notice some of the mercies of God to us in the past year.

We have to acknowledge the blessing of God on the labors of the husbandman. Many of the productions of the field have been in abundance; and those most essential to the comfort of man and beast. It may be ranked among our fruitful years. It deserves

to be noticed, that our rebuke this year has been, where the vices of the land called for it, upon our orchards, because so great a portion of the salutary beverage, they have yielded, has been converted to ardent spirit, to corrupt the morals, and to destroy the health of the people. It is remarkable, also, that the moderate drought of the summer, which did little other injury, greatly reduced the quantity and the quality of that important vegetable, which has of late been tortured into the means of intemperance. Would to God that such gentle rebukes and admonitions might take effect. That the rich might cease to covet gains, which are taken chiefly from the vices of the lower classes, and that the people might revert to the habits of their fathers.

The uncommon degree of health which has been enjoyed among us, should be a subject of special thanksgiving. With a slight exception of a local nature, the general health of the people through the State has been remarkable. We have had occasion to sympathize with our countrymen in more Southern cities, among "whom the pestilence has walked in darkness, and destruction wasted at noon-day:" and the greatest number of victims have been of those, who emigrated from among ourselves. Although no prevailing disease has been suffered to rage among us in this place, yet we miss from this solemnity some of our most loved and venerable friends, whom we shall long mourn and remember. The Commonwealth is also a mourner for a most revered and illustrious citizen.* Few have served their

* Gov. Strong.

generation with equal talents and fidelity, or have exhibited a fairer example of christian piety and virtue. He has been called into many important stations by the voice of his countrymen, in times of the greatest interest and difficulty. His wisdom, diligence, and energy, have been devoted to the country, without ostentation. He did nothing to be seen of men. He loved retirement, and left it only from a sense of duty. The first office in the Commonwealth had no charms for him; and he resigned it in the full vigor of his powers, to repose in the shade of his retirement. But the dangers of the state and country, and the importunity of the people called him again to the chair. We delighted to call him the Washington of our state; and in many features of his mind and character, no man more resembled the father of his country. He resembled him too, in the suddenness of his exit. For one so well-prepared, it was a favor thus to leave the world. On the evening of a Lord's day, spent in the sanctuary, he was translated in a moment, with no witnesses, but his sons, of the flight of his spirit. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

IV. In calling to our minds some of the subjects of grateful thanksgiving this day, let me in the fourth and last place, mention the mercy of the gospel, the greatest blessing of Heaven to man. O that we had a heart in due degree to estimate it! Other blessings chiefly regard our comfort, our outward welfare through this brief life; and are things, which perish with the using.

The design of the gospel is to purify and exalt our nature; to provide, in the renovation of the heart, a durable foundation of happiness and joy. It is a blessing greater than all others to a community; it promotes the love and practice of righteousness, renders magistrates just men, fearing God and hating covetousness, and the people submissive to wholesome laws, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. Its higher office is to open to our view a glorious immortality. It is the counsel of God for our salvation from sin and misery, and our everlasting advancement in perfection and joy.

How ought we to be thankful for the blessed gospel, and to bless the name of God, that we have not been visited with a famine of the word; and that our candlestick has not been removed out of its place. In the past year the pastor has parted from his beloved people, and committed himself to the ocean, and to Providence, with the hope to recover his declining health. You followed him with your kind solicitude, and with your prayers. How much better than our fears has our gracious God been to us. Preserved through a thousand dangers, his complaint softened by a mild climate, his frame invigorated by travel, and his health improved, he had the joy once more to be embraced by his family and his people, and without serious interruption has continued his sacred labors among you, with a good degree of ease and comfort. Grant him your prayers that his health may be perfected, that his labors may be blessed, and that what remains of his life may be

improved with zeal and better success in promoting your salvation.

In offering thanksgiving to God this day, let us remember with the deepest emotion his unspeakable gift to the world and to us, and bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. O may each one of this assembly long and strive to praise him with that glowing joy and gratitude, which transport the real subjects of his grace. Let it add to the joy of this day, that we behold the gospel extending its blessings into many lands, which had never been cheered by its healing beams. The long and dismal night of pagan darkness seems drawing towards the dawn of day. The swarming millions of Asia begin to open their eyes. Ethiopia stretches forth her hand; the islands in the great Pacific begin to be converted from idols and their sanguinary orgies, and to become vocal in the songs of Moses and the Lamb.— And our red brethren of the neighboring wilderness are beginning to attend to the things of their peace; are beginning to abandon savage life for agriculture and civil arts, and to embrace with affection the gospel and its teachers. We indulge the hope, that the time is near for the full accomplishment of the most precious predictions and promises of God's holy word; that the Father is about to give to his son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that he is, even now, saying to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the

earth. O may the gospel again spread like the lightning, which cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; and that kingdom be established, which shall be the joy of the whole earth. Continually let us pray, "Our Father who art in heaven; thy kingdom come. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

# SERMON XXI.

## THE PRIDE OF PROSPERITY, AND ITS FALL.

(Preached on the annual Fast, in 1823.)

DANIEL iv. 28,—31.

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?—While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: the kingdom is departed from thee.

In the chapter, from which this passage is taken, we have the interesting account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream or vision, and Daniel's bold exposition of it, followed by his faithful counsel, in these words:—"Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." The counsel was neglected, and the prophetic vision exactly accom-

plished, as we see in the text and verses following. I hope it may furnish many useful hints on this solemn anniversary, while I attempt to draw your attention to this affecting portion of sacred history.

In every stage and circumstance of life, very important is the knowledge of ourselves, and a consideration of the dangers and temptations to which we are exposed. But never is it more necessary thani n the day when general prosperity also is enjoyed around us. When suffering under adversity, the trial is severe; but we have some advantages in the conflict. The assaults are more from without, and the enemy more visible. And under repeated suffering, I speak particularly of the ills of poverty, the heart becomes ,less sensible, and learns to contract itself, and is sometimes, at least, seen to become less and less accessible to temptation. But in prosperity, a man is imperceptibly tempted from his guard ; and he is in a manner subdued before he suspects his danger. This remark, I doubt not, might be found verified in almost every man's private history, if he has been careful to note the changes of his mind, with the changes of his circumstances. But as the ebb and flow of prosperity among the mass of mankind are not very perceptible, the influence of such changes is not perhaps so commonly observed by them. The history of those individuals, whose lives have filled a larger compass, or who have more strongly felt the contrast of good and bad fortune, presents a mirror in which mankind may see themselves. The prince, who speaks in our text, is a glaring example of

the dangers into which the current of prosperity tends to bear its possessor, and of those perverse dispositions, which are wont to spring up in the heart in such a season. Nebuchadnezzar, from common life, rose suddenly to a height of grandeur, pride, and wickedness, almost unexampled. His father was a servant of the king of Assyria, and exciting an insurrection in Babylon, erected that part of the empire into an independent kingdom. During his father's life, Nebuchadnezzar commanded the army, and by his victories extended the Babylonian empire over a great portion of the East. By an alliance with the Medes, he effected the overthrow of the Assyrian monarchy, the greatest at that time in the world, and formed a vast empire on its ruins. Having finished his conquests, and succeeded his father in the government, he turned his attention to the internal policy of his kingdom, and the embellishment of his capital. In doing this, he accomplished works which have been the astonishment of succeeding ages, in the vast magnitude and extent of the city walls, and in the superb temples, and other edifices, the hanging gardens, artificial lakes and mountains comprehended within those walls. So great was his magnificence, and so widely extended his fame, that the prophet is no less just than happy, in his figurative description of him. "The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth." Such was his prosperity. Let us now see what were the fruits of it. Having attained the utmost height of human

greatness, he forgets, he contemns the divine hand which placed him there; "the hand, which pulleth down one, and setteth up another." The faithful prophet, with a freedom which perhaps no other human being would have ventured to use, apprized him of his danger, assured him of the divine threatening, and that nothing but an immediate repentance, manifested by righteousness and mercy, could avert the impending calamity.

Through the forbearance of God, he was spared twelve months, in which fruits of repentance were in vain looked for. His pride and arrogance seem to have risen higher. Contemplating the extent of his kingdom, he forgets that he is a man, a frail and dependent instrument of divine purposes, and impiously exclaims, as if he were a god—"Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and for the honor of *my* majesty?" We tremble at this arrogant and impious language. Yet in our humbler spheres of life, let me ask, are we pure from the same boastful and self-sufficient spirit? Are we not daily forgetful of the divine providence, in the mercies which we enjoy? If we grow rich by God's blessing, do we think of any thing beyond our own sagacity in forming, and our own energy and industry in executing the plans, by which the object is accomplished? But have we not particular reason to fear that as a nation, we feel much of that pride and arrogance which inflated the Babylonian king, in contemplating the strength and magnificence of his empire?

The world is astonished at the sudden rise and extension of our almost boundless republic. This fair surface, now adorned with fields, villages, and cities, from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, two hundred years ago was a wilderness. The population has increased almost beyond example. The two or three millions, which, within the memory of many of us, struggled for independence, and by the blessing of God, obtained it from the reluctant concession of the most powerful nation in Europe, in much less than a half century has trebled its numbers; and its wealth, and power, and arts and sciences, have kept pace with the population. The experiment of a free government, which was thought impracticable in a territory so extensive, has proved successful, and those dangers, which alarmed in the infancy of the union, seem less and less to be apprehended, and the hope of its permanency reasonable and well founded. The most sanguine anticipations are formed and fondly cherished of the future greatness, and power, and magnificence of this young country. In this survey of our present state, in this glowing forethought of what is before us, let me ask, is there not, in the most of us, something of the spirit which arrogantly speaks in our text? Is not this great Babylon, which our fathers, which *we* have built? Do we not look at humble instruments, and forget the divine wisdom which counselled, and the divine power which sustained them? If in words we have acknowledged the providence of God, how have our hearts been affected by his goodness? What evi-

dences of gratitude have we shewn? Has not iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold? Have not pride and luxury, the common attendants upon prosperity, corrupted our minds and manners? And have we not abundant occasion to humble ourselves before God, on account of the symptoms of a secure, careless, a proud, vain, and self-sufficient spirit, lest in his great displeasure he should suddenly arrest the current of his favor, and finding us unmoved and inattentive to the voice of kindness, seek our reformation by correction and chastisement?

This pride and forgetfulness of God, in the instance furnished by our text, were punished in a most sudden and awful manner. Even while his impious words were in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee." In the same hour the thing was fulfilled. His understanding went from him. He was seized with madness, and under its influence, fancied himself transformed into a brute, and fed on the grass of the field; and from being sheltered by the palace of royalty, was wet with the dew of heaven. In this signal manner was the arrogant king corrected, and brought to think with due humility of himself, and with just and exalted views of God, and of his holy and righteous providence, especially in disposing of nations and kingdoms.

This is indeed a most signal example, both of personal haughtiness and conceit, and in the sudden and dreadful manner of its correction. No mortal could

seem better fortified in his prosperity, so far as human power and sagacity were concerned. Yet in one hour the whole was reversed: and he, who thought himself independent and superhuman, was degraded below his species, and for a season compelled to rank himself among the beasts that perish.

This affords a most impressive lesson to us in our humbler stations. It should be a constant and deep conviction in our minds that we are dependent beings; that our possessions and comforts are ours through God's blessing, and can remain ours no longer than he shall ordain their continuance. In our prosperity we must say with the psalmist, "Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." If we fail of this acknowledgment, he may hide his face and we shall be in trouble. And this in our individual cases may be as sudden, if not as remarkable, as in the case we have considered. We are in his hands, and at his pleasure may be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. All nature stands armed to execute his will. Winds and waves, the terror by night, the arrow that flieth by day, the pestilence in darkness, and the destruction at noonday, wait on his pleasure. There are some awful moments where we have a most sensible conviction of the truth. When as in a late dreadful night, our habitations rock with the tempest, and the ocean with unusual billows, and we know not but they are bearing on their foaming bosoms some of our nearest and dearest friends, husbands, and fathers, is dashing with fearful violence against our rocky shores;—then it is that we feel our

dependence, and breathe upward our prayer for protection to the God of the sea and of the dry land. At all times, then, let us cherish a lively conviction of our dependence on God, of our obligations for his favours, and of our utter insufficiency by our own sagacity and effort to carry our enterprises into effect.

Let us now, in what remains of this discourse, apply the instruction of this interesting portion of sacred history to the duties of this day; let it instruct us to be humble before God; to look back on the pride and vain conceit, with which our hearts may have been inflated, with sincere contrition, and forbearing to trust to our own understanding or to confide in our strength and address, to place our supreme confidence in God as the author and supporter both of our religious and of our temporal prosperity. And,

1. Let us acknowledge our dependence on God for our religious prosperity. How wonderful and how precious are the means of grace which he has furnished! He has taught us his holy will by inspired prophets and law-givers, raised up in succession from the infancy of the world; and, to show his infinite compassion, and to produce in us a filial confidence in his grace and mercy, he has not spared his own Son, but freely given him up for us all. Truth and duty are distinctly revealed to us; life and death are plainly set before us; and every consideration is urged upon us to choose the good and refuse the evil—adapted to alarm, to convince and to persuade us. And as if this were not enough, he imparts his own spirit to help our infirmities, to illu-

minate the darkness of our minds, to convince us of sin, and to soften the hard heart with godly sorrow. This has he kindly done and is ready to do for us, if we do not practically neglect the means of grace. If then we are destitute of piety, let us find in the deficiency the occasion for self-reproach. And if we in any measure enjoy the hopes, the joys of religion, let us give all the praise to God, by whose grace all its means and opportunities have been bestowed.

2. We are instructed by this portion of sacred history, to ascribe our temporal prosperity to God, and to confide in him for its continuance. If we have been prosperous, let us beware of the impious language of the text, and of cherishing the thought that our prosperity is the result of our own independent wisdom or strength. And while we look forward to the uncertain events of the future, let us look up to God with a heart-felt sense of dependence upon him, and say, "Lord, by thy favor my mountain stands strong." In our several vocations, we cannot hope to prosper except by the smiles of his providence. It will be my duty and pleasure to go forth to sow the pure seed of the gospel among you. But while Paul may plant, and Apollos water, it is God alone, who can give the increase.

The husbandman is preparing to enter the field of his labors. Let him be sensible of his dependence. To you it belongs to cultivate the field, to enrich the soil, and to cast in the precious seed. But there are other things necessary to your success, which lie be-

yond your command and control. The former and the latter rain, the genial heat of the sun, and the due temperature of the elements, the prevention of blasting and mildew, the restraint of devouring insects, and the delay of autumnal frosts, are necessary to a plentiful harvest, and the disposal of all these is a divine prerogative. Untimely snows, deluging rains, drought, unseasonable cold, and scorching heat, rebuke vain confidence; and a propitious seed time, gentle and timely showers, and genial dews and refreshing gales, call at every stage of the progressive year for your grateful offerings to him who dispenses them.

The mariner is preparing for his voyage, to draw up treasures out of the deep, or to run his adventurous course through various seas and climates. Can they be indevout, while they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep? Can they be confident of success except as God shall send it? Or, when prospered in their pursuits, will they sacrifice to their net or hook, and burn incense to their drag, ascribe their success to their own skill and dexterity, or gratefully acknowledge the kind providence of God, by which they have succeeded. Let not the mariner for a moment forget his dependence on God, while he glides over the bosom of the great deep, with a plank only between him and his grave. Let him shudder to utter or to hear a word of blasphemy; and let his breath be praise and prayer, in storm and in calm, when he enters and when he leaves the sickly port, or eludes the wily and barbarous pirate.

We have not time to apply our subject with further particularity. But we are all equally dependent on divine mercy and protection at home and abroad. The comforts and blessings of domestic life, the tender ties between husbands and wives, parents and children need the fostering care and protection of our heavenly Father. While they are enjoyed, and our hearts overflow with gladness, to God should we render the praise, and to his further care should they devoutly be commended in morning and evening devotions.

3. Our subject should lead us to ascribe the prosperity of our land to God, and to rely on him alone for its continuance. On this important point, are we not in danger of entertaining something of that self-complacent feeling, something of that vanity, and arrogance, which were so signally punished in the instance of our text? When we look round on our happy land, the asylum of the wretched of other countries, with fields so fruitful and extensive, that agriculture alone might sustain the country; yet with commerce so abundant as to be the envy of older nations; and with manufactures so enterprising and profitable, as to excite the jealousy of the country from which we sprang; with internal improvements which are scarcely exceeded in the old world, uniting the lakes and the ocean, and bringing the distant country to be, as it were, in the neighborhood of the city; and with these natural advantages, when we consider our civil, literary, and religious privileges, a free and well balanced government, state and federal, our uni-

versal education in schools, our multiplied seminaries of a higher order, crowded with students, with houses of worship and teachers of piety, and full freedom to worship God agreeably to conscience;—when we look around, we behold a sight infinitely more gratifying than Nebuchadnezzar beheld in his proud city and mighty empire. But too many of us see in the whole the hand of man only; and vaunt the wisdom of our sages, the valour of our leaders, and the spirit of the poople, and thus indirectly say—"Is not this great Babylon which we have built for the house of the kingdom, and by the might of our power?" Let us repress a spirit like this, and cherish a pious sense of God's mercy to us and to our fathers. It is easy with a just and angry God to reverse the fair picture, now glowing before our eyes, as suddenly as he crushed the grandeur of the Babylonian prince, as suddenly as he overthrew both the city and empire under his impious successor to the throne.

Let us this day, then, mingle our grateful thanksgivings with our penitent confessions and contrite lamentations. It is God, who maketh us to differ from other nations which are standing up for their liberty against a host of assailants. Should the voice of liberty be silenced in Spain and Greece, and the union of despotic governments in Europe be successful against the balanced and free, there may be just cause to fear that invidious eyes will be cast on our happy shores, and hostility be borne against a government, which has

disappointed the hopes and predictions of its enemies. Let us seek our security in the divine protection and favors. Let us seek his favor by the fruits of repentance, by righteousness and mercy ; and God grant that it may be a lengthening out of our tranquillity.—Amen.

# SERMON XXII.

## THANKSGIVING.

[Preached on the annual Thanksgiving, in 1826.]

I Chronicles xvi. 8, 9.

Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

It is delightful for a devout mind to follow the royal psalmist through his numerous hymns, composed for common and special occasions. So deep is the feeling of piety, so glowing his sentiments of grateful affection, so fervent his sanctified imagination, so faithful his memory in recounting divine benefits, and so ardent is he in calling on men and angels, and even on inanimate nature, on fields and floods, on heaven and earth, to praise God, that that heart must be cold and dead to pious feeling, which is not warmed by his psalms into holy enthusiasm. The psalm, from which the text is

taken, was written as a psalm of thanksgivng for one of the most memorable occasions of David's reign, the occasion of bringing the ark to the city of David, where the king had made preparation for its reception. The twenty fourth of the psalms was performed during the procession, as I shall notice more particularly ; and that from which the text is taken, recorded in the Chronicles, was sung as a closing act of devotion on that occasion. "It was a psalm," says the sacred historian, "to thank the Lord ;" in which the grateful psalmist looks back on their remote history, and remembers the mercies conferred on their fathers and on themselves. This is done concisely, but with holy sublimity, and with the most affecting touches. Would God we might catch something of the spirit of David, on this devout and grateful occasion. Welcome this joyous anniversary, observed by the fathers and their children for two centuries past. May it be piously kept by our children so long as we shall remain a people.— It was the peculiar custom in New England in the beginning ; but it has gradually advanced southward and westward, and the time will come, I trust, when our whole nation, blessed of God as it is above all others, shall keep the annual festival, and, perhaps on the same appointed day, shall enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. In fulfilling the delightful duty of this day, I shall endeavor to afford my humble aid by several remarks, suggested by the example of David and Israel, and by a grateful recollection of the mercies of the closing year. Let me,

I. Remark, that the noble end for which man was made, is to glorify God, his Maker.

For this end he was made but a little lower than the angels; constituted with a spirit which goeth upward, while the spirit of the brute goeth downward; with reason, affection, speech; with a voice of sweetest melody, and an ear delighting in harmony; with noble capacities, by which he is distinguished from all other earthly creatures. He was thus made to be the organ, through which the praise of this lower world was to sound forth, and to rise, I may say, and mingle with the concert of the skies. Of this duty of our nature, we are not unmindful, when in silent contemplation upon his perfections, works, and providence, we only meditate the praise of God. And when our devout sentiments are expressed in the emphatical language of cheerful obedience and submission to his will, we praise God. We praise him by the simple utterance, in words, of the conceptions we form of his infinite greatness and excellence, and this especially in that social homage, which we offer in the prayers of the sanctuary. In these various methods, with a devout and solemn mind, with an animated and grateful heart, it behoves us to praise him, who is the sum and the source of all that is great and good. I proceed to remark,

II. That there is a method more affecting and sublime, to praise God; more heavenly and angelic; a method which engages the best powers of the mind, and employs the noblest faculties of the body, and awakens

the liveliest affections of the soul; which combines a multitude in a grand sympathetic concert; a multitude feeling the same devout sentiment, and striving in the same breath to utter the praises of their Maker. And this was the particular method, to which the royal prophet exhorted in the text—"Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him."

It is pleasing to observe how early in the history of mankind this method of praising God was in use. And this not merely in the Christian, and Hebrew, and patriarchal churches; but also among the heathen. Plutarch tells us that singing and music among the ancient Greeks were wholly employed in divine worship; and he laments the profanation and abuse of the holy and consecrated art in later times, when it was brought into the theatre. The stoick philosopher thought it the "business of men to sing praises to the Deity; and that it became the laborer in the field, at his table, to sing a hymn to God. Since I am a reasonable creature," says he, "I will never cease to praise God, and to exhort others to do the same"—a pious sentiment not unworthy of inspired lips.

That sacred music was cultivated among the earliest heathen is not incredible, since from scripture history we find its origin beyond the flood. So early as the time of the Exodus, it had attained excellence and practical perfection, possibly not much surpassed in later ages. The sublime and nervous hymn composed by Moses, after the passage of the Red Sea, was set to

music and sung upon its bank by that transported people, whom God had delivered.

The Israelites, after their establishment in Canaan, particularly in the times of David and Solomon, rendered a degree of attention to sacred music, unparalleled, I believe, among other nations. They employed it in the religious devotions of the tabernacle and temple, in their public and private rejoicings, at their feasts and in their mournings. Whole families devoted themselves to sacred music as their entire business. A great part of the tribe of Levi was included in the choir. So numerous were the singers and musicians in the time of David, that they were denominated a host, and were organized under three general officers, and twelve of subordinate rank. The twenty four sons of the three great masters of the temple music, were at the head of twenty four bands of the most skilful performers who officiated by turns, in the time of David, in the tabernacle, and in the time of Solomon, in the temple. The temple of Solomon, vast as it was, may have been too limited to admit the musical corps at once, or to sustain the blended power of their voices and instruments. On the great occasion of bringing the ark into the city of David, the hymn, from which the text is taken, was performed, and also, it is commonly believed, the twenty fourth psalm. On this occasion, it seems, the whole power of their host of singers was exerted in full chorus on the hill of Zion. We can scarcely imagine a scene more august and awful. A great part of the nation formed the procession which ascended the hill of Zion;

and thirty thousand select persons, habited in white robes, aided in the devotions of the day. The king himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen, and wearing an ephod, led the procession, singing those striking words, descriptive of the acceptable worshipper, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?—He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;" is the response, "who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation! At this moment, the interpreters of this psalm suppose, that the procession had ascended the hill, and had reached the gates of the city, when the choir, consisting of many thousands, shouted with a loud voice, in those words, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." Then another choir within the gates, responding, ask, "Who is this king of glory?" The procession replies, "The Lord mighty in battle;" and again shout, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." The massy gates, in the form of a portcullis, were then probably thrown high in air, and as the ark was passing in, the city choir again sing, "Who is this king of glory?" and the procession following the ark, replies, "The Lord of hosts; he is the king of glory."

Is it possible, my hearers, to imagine a scene on earth of greater solemnity and grandeur? The elevation of the spot rendered the ark and the immense mul-

titude conspicuous, and the voices and instruments audible. If limited to temples made with hands, the awful shout would have been too tremendous formortal organs to bear. It rose to the concave of heaven, and died away with melting sweetness on the ears of the remotest persons of that countless multitude. And well may we suppose, that the assembly were greatly affected with a scene like this, and their hearts wrought up to a holy enthusiasm of devotion, at least for a moment. And as the concluding hymn exhorted them, that they "remembered God's marvellous works to their nation, and were mindful of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac, confirmed to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant." As they saw the ark moving in the procession, enveloped in the cloud of glory, they gratefully remembered the protection, which He, who dwelt in the cloud, extended to their fathers in a thousand dangers, in Egypt and the wilderness.

So sacred and so important has music been regarded in the worship of God, from the earliest times of which we have any history, especially among God's peculiar people, on ordinary and special occasions. Surely, then, we are not to regard it lightly, as a decent appendage of public worship, as a relief from graver thought and duty, but as a means of awakening within us pious and grateful feelings, and of expressing them in the most devout manner. We ought to engage in this part of devotion with the same solemnity and affection, with

which we do in prayer, fixing our minds on the thoughts we utter, and sending upward our hearts with our voices. I fear, that many who would feel condemned, if they suffered their thoughts to wander in prayer, think little of thoughtlessness and levity in singing. Yet many of the hymns we sing are direct addresses and prayers to the Deity. His venerable name is often repeated in them, which should never be uttered without holy fear. Is not the praise and thanksgiving which many of us utter in singing, formality and lip service; harmony it may be; but is it melody in the heart unto the Lord? While anxious to utter no discordant note, which should draw upon us the eyes and censure of our fellow-worshippers, still more anxious let us be, that our hearts be right with God, in the delightful exercise. Making melody to the Lord in the heart, what a sweet and heavenly accent would this give to our singing; a pathos it would give, which would awaken pious affections in others, and wrap an assembly in grateful enthusiasm.

Great, indeed is the influence of sweet and solemn music in our churches. We are not, perhaps, sufficiently sensible how great is its influence upon ourselves. They who never occupy the place where I stand, cannot well imagine the relief, and aid, and comfort afforded to the preachers of the gospel, by sacred music, well and feelingly performed. We, perhaps, are more conscious than others also, how much we are indebted to excellent singing, for preparing our hearers to receive the truth in the love of it from our lips. You remember, when the mind of Saul was agitated with strong

passions, with envy, and jealousy, and melancholy, nothing but his minstrel could soothe him to peace. And the good prophet Elisha, when somewhat ruffled by the presence of Ahab, first called for a minstrel to calm his mind, and then he felt the afflatus of the divine spirit, moving him to prophecy. So an assembly met for worship and instruction, by sweet and solemn music, is brought into that serious and serene frame of mind, which is adapted to receive the visits of the divine spirit, and the instruction of the sanctuary. Thus important is sacred music to the best improvement of the means of grace. But it is to be regarded with great reverence, as a direct act of devotion. As such, let us always enter upon it, when the words of the hymn or anthem are addressed to the Deity, and no more trifle in praise than in prayer. Chiefly let us remember, that though a melodious voice and skill in the holy art are necessary, yet, the highest excellence in singing is grace in the heart. If this be absent, let us reflect with concern, that in the ears of God, the sweetest song and softest voice are like sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, inharmonious and offensive. Let it ever be our devout endeavor to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also, and to make melody unto the Lord in our hearts. It is plainly intimated in the scriptures, that this will be one of the delightful employments of the heavenly state, and will be a medium of praise for the redeemed through eternity. Let us on earth, then, sing with an heavenly frame of mind, and, then, at no remote time, we shall, with a choir

which no man can number, sing the song of Moses the servant of the Lord, and the song of the Lamb forever. But it is time that I remark,

III. That we should give feeling and spirit to our hymns and anthems of thanksgiving, by a grateful recollection of the tender mercies of God, to our fathers and to ourselves—"Make known his deeds among the people," says the text—"Talk ye of all his wondrous works." And, accordingly, the psalmist in the hymn of thanksgiving looks back to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, the founders of their nation; to Moses their lawgiver; and to the miracles of mercy, by which "a little one was to become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation." Let us do the same; for, except in point of miracles, our origin and history are as wonderful as that of the Israelites, and as strikingly evince the merciful providence of God. God selected Abraham, and called him away from his kindred and native land, to be the founder of their nation. And let us gratefully acknowledge, that he selected to be the founders of New England, men of like faith with Abraham; men who shrunk not from similar sacrifices for God, and a pure religion; men, who with the spirit of martyrs, left the land of their fathers' sepulchres, to enjoy the rights of conscience in a howling and unknown wilderness, and to worship God, as they thought, in greater purity than they were allowed to do at home. Their faith and patience were severely tried by persecution; those of them who were preachers were silenced, and often imprisoned, and fined beyond their

ability to pay, and this because they declined to comply with unscriptural impositions, and refused to read from the desk the royal license to profane the Sabbath by licentious sports. Thus they were men, trained in the rude, but friendly school of adversity; strong in faith, spiritual in temper, and pure in manners, even to a proverb. Such, blessed be God this day and forever, were our fathers, and the founders of New-England.

The mercy of God was as memorable in their preservation, as their selection. The facts are familiar to most of my hearers. I can only glance at his singular care and goodness to them in Holland, on the sea in a leaky vessel, on a winter's coast, in securing their landing and settlement in a wild desert, surrounded by savage enemies. With what exactness can we adopt the words of David, and apply them to the little bands of Plymouth and Salem—"When they were but few, even a few, and strangers in the land; and when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people, He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

Another great mercy to be acknowledged this day with gratitude is, that God endued our fathers with wisdom to lay the deep foundations of what is now most distinguishing and excellent in our civil and religious institutions. The great principles in church and state, which now render us the admiration or the envy of other nations, were understood and established

by our fathers. They have been only modified from time to time, to suit the circumstances of an expanding Commonwealth, and a wide extending federal empire. The sacred rights of conscience, the right to read and interpret the scriptures for ourselves, and to worship God in that manner which we think most agreeable to his word, were solemnly affirmed. Civil liberty, founded on the great principle, that all men are born free and equal, was recognised. And that these sacred and civil rights might not be abused, nor endangered, they held to the necessity of universal education, and general knowledge. To make a certainty of this, schools and higher seminaries were established; churches were built, and the sanctuaries lighted by the talents and piety of gifted men; and often a small church and society had the labors of more than one ardent and enlightened pastor. Who endued our fathers with a wisdom and discretion, so far beyond the wisest of those whom they left behind in the old World? Who preserved them from the jealous interference of the sentinels and satellites of royal and ecclesiatical despots? As sons of such fathers, we should be most ungrateful not to say, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." This mercy should rise in our estimation, when we turn our eyes to other parts of this continent, and see with what difficulties the same principles have there to contend. It is not the power of the mother country;—that is prostrate. It is ignorance, and slavery of mind and soul, in which the people generally were systematically held so long, and

out of which they cannot be suddenly elevated—which constitutes their danger.

But I return to our own history. I regret, that the time does not permit me to speak of a thousand mercies of God, to those who have gone before us, and of those leadings of Providence, almost as visible as the pillar of cloud and of fire to the Israelites, by which the country was gradually prepared to rise out of colonial dependence into rank among independent nations. The events of the revolutionary war are familiar to you :—A nation in its cradle, contending with the most powerful nation in Europe, and successful. Who prepared for us the greatest and best man of the age, and perhaps of any age since the days of inspiration, and gave him to conduct the war of independence? Who furnished those master spirits in Congress, who dared to sever this young scion from the parent stock? Who gave to the people resolution to sustain the act of their delegates, through a seven years' war? And who at length crowned those noble sufferings and daring efforts with complete success, and blessed our country with acknowledged independence and peace? Again let us say—"It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

And what a series of mercies has God granted our country from that day to this! The establishment of our national government; the original administration of it by the father of his country: the well principled neutrality maintained, while all Europe was in the flames of war; the unexampled prosperity and growth of the

population, by natural increase as well as by the resort of thousands to find in our happy land a refuge from oppresssion, poverty, and calamity; these are blessings, which should swell our notes of praise in the anthems and hymns of this day.

But the great blessing to be this day and always acknowledged with our purest and warmest gratitude, is the gospel. This we enjoy in its purity, without any to dictate our faith, or our solemn ceremonies. This we enjoy in the richest variety of means. Perhaps no body of men in the world is more amply supplied with religious teachers than New-England. And to the regular preaching of the word and administration of ordinances, is added the influence of sabbath schools, which we may hope, under God, will train the young, as a generation, eminently to serve God. The Gospel thus enjoyed, is an immense blessing, and by that virtue which it is diffusing through the community, it is the preserving spirit of our civil freedom. And if we did improve it as we ought, it would enhance the enjoyment of our temporal blessings by the assurance of glory and blessedness beyond the grave.

With this review of the mercies of Providence to us and to our fathers, let our hearts awake to fervent gratitude; and let us engage, not in a cold and formal manner, but with our whole souls in the delightful duty of thanksgiving and praise. "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits." "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel forever

and ever." How shall we best express to Him the sense we have of his benefits? By the cheerfulness with which we stretch out our hands to the poor, the grateful and appropriate duty with which we close the public services of the day. Bounty to the poor is gratitude to God. Freely we have received, freely let us give. And "the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." Amen.

# SERMON XXIII.

## ECCLESIASTICAL PEACE RECOMMENDED.

(Delivered before the Annual Convention of the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts in Boston, May 31, 1827.)

ROMANS XIV. 19.

Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Serious as are the duties, which constantly call for the anxious cares and indefatigable labors of the Christian minister, there is not an occasion of his life, which inspires so great an awe, or awakens so deep a solicitude, as when he stands in this place to lead in the devotions of the assembled ministers of the commonwealth, and to offer to them the Annual Address. After much anxious thought, I have not been able to find any subject, which appears to me so important in itself, so accordant with the appropriate character of christian ministers, so suited to the state of the religious community, and, as I humbly trust, so agreeable to the will of the Great Head of the Church, as the subject pre-

sented in the simple exhortation of the text. PEACE! it is the expressive word, which describes the state of heaven, where a note of discord is never heard, the hearts of all blending in a harmony as sweet, as that of their harps and voices. The title by which the Eternal delights to be known is "the God of peace." The Messiah was known in prophecy as "the Prince of peace;" and exulting angels announced his advent in those sublime and cheering words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."—The great object of his incarnation was to reconcile a guilty and distracted world to God and one another; and his preaching was the GOSPEL OF PEACE.

My design is a plain, practical discourse on a subject, which seems to me called for by the signs of the times. I shall not be anxious for novelty, nor careful to avoid truisms. The subject is important in a very high degree; and ought to be presented often and earnestly, till there be a better state of feeling among Christians. What I suggest to my brethren, I take to myself; and the thing *farthest* from my intention is to be personal or sectarian in my remarks. I enter on my task with the full persuasion, that many worthy and excellent men, who dissent from each other on some subjects, will perfectly concur in the sentiments I am about to express in favor of peace. My fathers and brethren, while we consider the *obligations* and *importance* of the duty, and the best *means* of securing the blessings of peace, may the God of peace breathe his own spirit upon us, and, through our word

and example, upon the religious community, in which we hold so responsible a station, andwhere our influence cannot fail to be beneficently or balefully felt by thousands.

The obligations and importance of the duty enjoined in the text are evident by the emphatic manner, in which it is mentioned in other parts of the sacred scriptures. Words can be no stronger, than those of Paul to the Romans– "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." His indignant rebuke of the Corinthians for their sectarian divisions and party spirit stands, as a perpetual rebuke to Christians of a similar spirit. In almost every Epistle he pleads for peace with impassioned earnestness, beseeching Christians, "by the consolation in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the spirit to be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, doing nothing through strife and vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, each esteeming other better than themselves." The other apostles are as emphatic on this point as Paul. John once asked leave to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans; but after the day of Pentecost, when he better understood the will of his master, he joyful preached the gospel to them. In his writings this Apostle was never weary of inculcating love and peace; and to his hundredth year, when he could say no more, he said to the christian assemblies—*little children, love one another.*

The mind of our divine Master, in regard to this duty is easily ascertained. The two great parties,

raging at that time, were the Jewish and Samaritan, who carried their animosity so far as to have "no dealings with each other," and to withhold common courtesy. From our Lord's conversation at Jacob's well, we learn that he thought the balance of truth and argument was on the Jewish side; but he labored to soften the animosity between the parties, and to bring the Jews to think, that sincerity and goodness might be found with their hated and execrated opponents. Hence the parable of the good Samaritan; and hence his rebuke to James and John for their persecuting spirit at the gates of Samaria. Our Lord could acknowledge sincerity and worth in persons, who in some things were deficient. "Master," said the disciple whom Jesus loved, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." But Jesus said, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is on our part."

But we need not collect our Lord's view, of the duty enjoined in the text from scattered incidents, or casual expressions which fell from his lips. It is evident from all he said and did, that he regarded peace, as a duty of supreme importance. Take the wonderful passage, which opens the sermon on the mount. There is a breathing of peace in each of the beatitudes, and in one of them, the highest possible character is given of the peace-makers—"they shall be called the children of God." His solicitude for peace among his disciples is set in a light equally strong by his new commandment, his golden rule, his law of forgiveness, his pa-

rable of the unmerciful servant, and, I need only add, by his own example and dying prayer.

In what manner the duty is regarded by the blessed God himself it is sufficient to refer you to a single passage—Of "six things which the Lord hateth, and of seven which are an abomination to him," the top of the climax is "he that soweth discord among brethren."

Such is the strong light, in which the subject is placed by the holy Scriptures; it could not well be stronger; and yet how justly will it appear, if for a moment we consider the evils of war and dissension, and the blessings of peace.

It has been keenly said, that war is the *natural* state of man. It has been, we must acknowledge, almost his *habitual* state. A very great proportion of human crime and wo has sprung from this source. The earth was purged by the flood, because "it was filled with violence," yet with the signatures of that fearful judgment of heaven before the eyes of every age, the earth has been wet with human blood, shed by human hands, from the days of Nimrod to our own time. Blood flowed like water in the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, Roman wars; and the wars of our own day have been scarcely less sanguinary; and these, revolting thought! in the heart of Christendom. We can have no adequate idea of the crimes and miseries of war, when they are historically or geographically distant from us. In the late short and desultory war in our own country we saw and felt something of the evil; and how its hor-

rors appeared to us is evident from the almost delirious joy, with which the whole country received the news of peace. To quench the flames of war, raging with ceaseless fury among the nations, is a great object of God in the gospel, which is a proclamation of *peace on earth.* The reign of the Messiah was predicted to be a reign of peace, when "the leopard should lie down with the kid, and the calf and young lion together, and a little child should lead them; and men should beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more." Would to God that in this respect there were brighter tokens of an approaching millenium.

To promote *religious* peace upon earth is a still holier and higher object of the gospel; peace in the individual soul; rest from the tumult of turbulent passions and debasing lusts; relief from the stings and forebodings of a wounded conscience; a joyous serenity, diffused through the soul by conscious love to God and man and the sweet assurance of reconciliation to God in Christ, and the forgiveness of sins. "The fruit of the spirit in the soul is love, joy, peace—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

Religious peace is *social* as well as personal; and is that sacred harmony, which subsists among the members of a church and congregation. Little religious communities, denominated churches or congregations, were formed in the first age of Christianity; and from the Acts and Epistles we learn how solicitous the apostles were to preserve peace in them. We

should not be less so. As many motives and obligations urge us, as the first Christians, *to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.* It is easily lost; it is with difficulty recovered. So imperfect is the sanctification of real Christians in the present state, such the diversity of their views, their tempers, and attainments, that it is often in danger. When it is preserved in a church on just principles; when its peace is not the stagnant calm, produced by indifference to divine things, to the honor of the Head, and the purity of the members; when peace is the fruit of personal religion and of affectionate watchfulness and fidelity, such peace in a church is an antepast of heaven itself.

Scarcely less important is peace in that interesting and sacred community, which we denominate a parish; an association for the support and enjoyment of the gospel. Amidst the shocks, which occasionally agitate the elements of a parish, especially in a day like this, much of the wisdom which is from above is needed to prevent the utter wreck of peace. There must be mutual condescension; the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak; the language of irritation must be suppressed; and minor sacrifices or different sides must be cheerfully made to secure the inestimable blessings of union, strength, and peace. The noiseless influence of a few may often dissipate a gathering storm, and even of one, if he be a minister of Christ, blessed of God with wisdom and gentleness, and moving among his people in the spirit of his Master. Peace so preserved is "as the dew of Hermon;" and such a parish

is a scene grateful to God himself; "for there he commands the blessing, even life forever more."

To have a just sense of the worth of peace, need we look at the reverse of these pictures, and observe the mischiefs of division and discord? Observe a divided and alienated family—the parents bickering with each other, and violent with their children—correcting without judgment or mercy, or yielding them to their humors with a fatal negligence. The children also rebellious to abused authority, "hateful and hating one another!" And yet it is a sadder sight to behold a divided church, *a family of Christ;* holy brethren by profession, but alienated from one another; listening to designing strangers; taking counsels apart; disputing with bitterness on trifles, or on subjects inscrutable; the voice of clamor and wrath heard within the precincts of the sanctuary—confidence lost, and love extiguished—*receiving one another only to doubtful disputions.* But I turn from the unfinished sketch, devoutly praying that spectacles like these may not be multiplied among the churches of the pilgrims.

Under this branch of the subject, I will only remark once more, that we shall have a very erroneous notion of religious peace, should we think that it may be limited to our sect, or to persons symbolizing with us in faith and forms. The relations of peace, as the gospel fixes them, look far and wide. They extend from church to church, from one denomination to another; and from the catholic church of christendom to the whole brotherhood of mankind. For, like love, the

principle and soul of peace, it has no limit within the circle, which comprehends the human family. The most revolting errors of paganism, while they excite unmingled horror in a christian bosom, cannot justify hostility to those who sincerely embrace them.

Having seen the high importance of the duty enjoined in the text, and the strong obligations which the sacred scriptures impose to fulfil it, I ask your attention to a few things, which should influence us to *ecclesiastical peace.*

It is very well known that the principle cause of dissension in the religious world is the different opinions which men derive from the same inspired volume.—To allay the heat of contention about opinions,

I. Let us consider the important fact that the great object of religion is *practical* rather than *speculative.*

The gospel is peculiarly addressed to the *heart.* It has no appearance of aiming to initiate men in a system of opinions, or to resolve a body of difficult points. Our Lord himself, "in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," was little anxious to correct many of the prejudices and errors of the time, even speaking in accordance with them, when they had no bad influence upon the heart; and withholding from the apostles themselves some things important, "because," said he, "ye cannot bear them now." His high and benevolent object was to make men holy, rather than logically and metaphysically accurate in their notions. He taught the most important truths impressively, but not philosophically; not in select and uniform

and strictly definite terms, but in a plain way, adapted to sanctify the heart and to reform the life. He taught our relations and duties to God and the Saviour, and one another, and enforced his instruction by a disclosure of a future and eternal retribution, presenting the highest possible encouragements to virtue, and arraying the most awful terrors imaginable in the path of sin. It is on subjects of this nature, that the scriptures dwell in language so plain and with repetition so accumulated that there is little room for debate or dissent. Essentials are stated practically. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father." The wise man, whose building is upon the rock, is he who heareth and doeth the sayings of Christ; and he who does the will of his Father, the same is his "brother, and sister, and mother." Such are the essentials, Christ being judge. And this is ground, where Christians may meet in peace and with a general consent of opinions. And when a man neglects these truths, in personal religion, or in religious instruction; when he becomes careless of the corruptions of the heart, and tolerant of the errors of life and conduct, to fall into inflammatory controversy about the metaphysics of religion, it seems little better, than to stand disputing with his neighbor about a boundary, while his house is in flames.

This general thought we may trace into one more particular, as making for peace.

II. We should consider that the gospel makes *love and peace* necessary, but not agreement in opinions.

The necessity of love, and of peace as the fruit of it, need I prove? This is the great fundamental in religion, "He that loveth is born of God. He that loveth his brother, abideth in light;" in him there is no essential error. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." He it is, that is in darkness. "Now remaineth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Love, then, is fundamental, and love includes peace. But,

Agreement in opinions is not necessary, though it is very desirable. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye," says Paul, "but not to doubtful disputation."* Here communing together is required, where there is difference of opinion; and at the same time it is recommended to avoid disputing on points of difference, as tending to endanger love and peace.

It is sometimes said triumphantly, *there is but one way to heaven.* True; and it is the way over which "the unclean shall not pass," says the prophet; *the way of holiness:* and this may be pursued under very different forms of apprehension and belief. The way is strait, as to sensual indulgence; but broad in regard to matters of judgment and mere opinion. If you call it the way of *faith;* it is faith as a principle rather, than as standing for any definite articles of belief. The scripture definition of saving faith is "Faith, which

*See Whitby in loc.

works by love." This, men of feeble powers, and of imperfect knowledge, and of course of many errors, may exercise possibly in a higher degree, than some Christians of angelic powers and knowledge. Some seem to think, that great shrewdness and talent and profound investigation are necessary to find out the way of salvation; yet, if we believe the prophet, "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

Agreement in opinions cannot be necessary to salvation, because it is a thing *impossible*. Disagreement results from our nature and condition. We differ from each other in the powers of our minds, in their temper and complexion, in education and association, and a thousand other accidents, which influence opinion; so that it would be a moral miracle, if we all arrived at the same points in traversing the boundless field of truth; all, the child and the man, the learned and ignorant, the sanguine and phlegmatic, the cautious and supersitious, the lover of mystery and the idolater of reason. So many things beyond our control combine to influence our belief, that it is quite impossible, that that there should be a perfect agreement in opinion. Be it so, then, if it must; but while we differ, we need not, we must not divide, but preserve unity of affection amidst diversity of opinion.

It will be said, "That some opinions are fundamental in religion; to those who deny these it is licentious to extend our charity." I grant it; and yet, in order to peace, I remark,

III. Very great care and tenderness are necessary

in determining *what are fundamental opinions.* This has always been the dividing question; and it is observable, that those who have multiplied fundamentals to the greatest extent and minuteness have been most intolerant to those who dissent from them. The Romans hold every opinion, enjoined by their church, to be fundamental, and have pursued heretics with torture and anathema *ultra moenia flammantia mundi.* Protestants, however, dared to separate from the Catholic church on the simple principle, that *every man may read and interpret the Scriptures for himself.* And yet even they have very generally inflicted such penalties, as the civil power would permit, on one another, for not interpreting them alike; or, which is the same thing, for not coming to the same opinion as to what is essential. But this is violence to the golden rule. We shall never have peace, before fundamentals are acknowledged to lie in a narrow room. "I am fully assured," says the admirable Chillingworth, "that God does not and therefore that man ought not to require any more of any man, than this, to believe the scripture to be God's word, to endeavor to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it." To a similar conclusion have arrived the clergy of one of the most ancient, enlightened, and pious of the protestant churches in Europe. On the spot, where a Protestent was for his faith,* burned to death by Protestants, the united pastors have recently declared, "If you acknowledge Christ and the scriptures, we acknowledge you

* Servetus, in 1553, in Geneva.

for Christians and brethren. We do not require of you to renounce a particle of your faith or doctrines, but only not to impose them on us."

The fundamentals of Richard Cecil, an eminent and successful preacher, whose general faith the strictest will not question, we find in a valedictory to his people, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God. And what have I declared that counsel to be. All the curious distinctions of the schools? all the peculiarities insisted on so strongly by different sects? No such thing. I have followed the great apostle in testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

"There has been a slander brought against religion that we are *not agreed* as to the truths we should set before men. I say it is false; we are agreed. All, who know any thing of real religion are agreed, that the substance of the matter is contained in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. If a minister testifies these things; if he speaks plainly and simply these grand, essential truths of God's word; though he die before another sabbath return, he may rest in peace, leaving the issue in God's hand. Brethren, you are my witnesses. I have attempted to clear my ministry of all disputable subjects, in order to set before you the plain fact of the death and resurrection of Christ and of salvation through him."*

* See Christian Observer, Vol. x. p. 777.

The scriptures themselves speak of fundamentals with the greatest simplicity. "This is life eternal" saith the great Teacher, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the good profession of faith, for which Peter was blessed. On a similar profession, Philip baptized the Ethiopian. Saith Paul, "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." John is still shorter—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." He who receives this one grand truth receives with it, of course, the gospel, and all that he perceives to be contained in it. Poor fallible men may not presume to make more fundamentals than God has made. In order to peace,

IV. We should consider that error, especially on subjects hard to be understood, denotes weakness of intellect, rather than perverseness of will, and, being involuntary, should be pitied as a misfortune, not condemned as a sin.

We can all see, that it would be unreasonable and immoral to hate or speak reproachfully of a man, because he was blind, or lame; and error is the mere effect of the blindness and lameness of the mind. Blindness is sometimes occasioned by a corrupt bias, by a love of sin, which makes him shut his eyes to the light, and then cannot be innocent. A more dreadful instance of such blindness cannot be imagined, than in

the betrayers and murderers of the Son of God, yet the holy sufferer withheld not his compassion even from them; but, amidst the anguish of such a death, prayed—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." With such an example before us, shall we presume to condemn and reject our fellow men for a difference of opinion on subjects of doubtful practical influence? Especially when it cannot be denied,

V. That we are ourselves in error, and greatly need the charity we are called upon to exercise.

Will this be denied? Short of Rome, it is hoped, that no sect or individual claims to be considered as *infallible.* We were once astonished to hear it said in this place that "many may persuade themselves that they have embraced the truth, who yet are in fatal error; but we who have embraced the truth, *know it.*" But can this be thought much less than a claim of Omniscience? or at least of inspiration? It becomes us rather to confess with deep humility, that "we are of yesterday and know nothing." We err in a thousand particulars, greater or less; and who but ONE shall determine our comparative demerit in this respect? To Him let it be submitted, and every man stand or fall to his Master. I intend no apology for error, but would vindicate the broad foundation, which the scriptures lay for mutual forbearance and love. If we would preserve peace and edify one another,

VI. It is incumbent upon us to avoid *angry disputes and censorious imputations.*

The members of the text, connected together, plainly intimate, that the things which make for peace, put us into the best capacity to promote truth and edfication. And this is undoubtedly the case. Convince the man, whom you think to be in error, that you feel real kindness for him, and desire his welfare, and he will throw open his bosom to you, and will listen with fairness to your arguments and persuasions. But approach him in panoply and with a hostile air, and he will retire into his castle, and stand on his defence, and appear in steel against his enemy, his arguments, and persuasions. There is truth in the Eastern apologue. The wind and sun contended for the traveller's cloak. The wind would prevail by violence; but the traveller grasped his cloak the faster. The sun shone forth with a serene, insinuating beam, warming him gently and by degrees, and he hastened to resign his cloak.

But this "meekness of wisdom" in religious discussion is too seldom seen. "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," is the current cry to ruffle up our spirits. But we must remember that a "man is not crowned, except he contend lawfully;" and it is not lawful contention, except "all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away, with all malice." And what does Jude intend by the "faith once delivered to the saints?" Not the confession of Nice, nor of Trent, nor of Dort, nor any other confession of faith, expressed in "words of man's wisdom;" but the faith, expressed in "words which the

Holy Ghost teacheth"—the *text* of the bible, not the human, fallible interpretation. It is important to ask further; against whom would Jude have us contend? In the next verse he tells us, against "ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness;" against men "who deny," if any such there be, pretending to be Christians, "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." With such a spirit and with faith so understood, we may, we ought "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." So contending, we shall exercise our zeal upon things necessary, and our charity about the rest, and the happy fruit of such contention will be peace and mutual edification.

But I forbear to prolong the argument on this inexhaustible subject.

In concluding, I beseech my fathers and brethren to give due consideration and weight to what has been said; for under God, the peace of the church is in OUR hands. It is not too much to say, that we have a mighty influence and a fearful responsibility. We have the ear of the people, and their eyes are upon us; and, generally speaking, they will be peaceful, or contentious, —they will forbear one another in love, or be accusers of their brethren and exclusive, as we give the example and exhortation. "Now the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth. Let us frown

on the spirit of schism, that would crumble the fair fabric of our churches into such feeble and unsightly masses, as to excite the contempt, or derision of the enemies of religion, and lay insupportable burthens on the friends of Christian institutions, or make them, in many places, dependent on strangers, or destitute of the blessing of a settled ministry. Nothing can be more important in the religious and civil community than to prevent the rising of jealousies between the church and parish. The union between them is sacred, and, I may say, of conjugal seriousness and tenderness. It is not good for either to be alone.

May I be permitted respectfully to suggest, that if we desire either to convince the erroneous, or to confirm those whom we esteem correct in faith, we should avoid a controversial manner of preaching. It is expedient to state and defend truth, rather than to assail error; to build up, rather than to overthrow. If truth be established, it is the subversion of error. An assault on persons, or sects, or names, or favorite notions inflames all parties, and puts them in the worst state to be edified. The pulpit is too sacred a place to become an arena; and, what is it better, than the unhallowed offering of Nadab and Abihu, to kindle a fierce zeal, and to scatter *strange fire* among those, to whom we minister? Our humble endeavor should be to promote a very different spirit; to break the heart with a sense of its own sins, rather than to excite its resentment for the errors of others; to bring our hearers to cry with the

publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," than to "thank God with the Pharisee that they are not as other men."

The return of this interesting anniversary brings with it many pleasing and painful reminiscences. Here we have been greeted by the smiles and instructed by the wisdom and experience of men of God, whose faces we shall see no more till the resurrection of the just. Every year gives occasion to cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth;" and the death of a brother in the meridian of life and usefulness has occurred, and often occurs to give to surviving laborers in the vineyard the admonition—"Be ye also ready, for in such an hour, as ye think not, the son of man cometh." It frequently adds to the pain of bereavement, that men, whose "praise is in the churches," and whose "record is on high," who "were rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom," had little else; but, dying, they cheerfully confided their widows and orphans to God and the benevolence of this occasion. In your behalf, permit me to say, they shall not be forgotten. That zeal for God and the salvation of souls, that abstraction from the world, that forgetfulness of every thing but Christ and the church, deserve and shall receive such reward as is in our power. It is delightful to see the opulent of this benevolent city honoring this occasion with their presence and distinguished liberality, and thus showing their respect for the dead, their sympathy with their families, and their

cheering encouragement to the living ministry. While we stretch out our hands to those, who have seen better days, we have the satisfaction to know, that we perform an act, which will be better estimated above. For "pure religion and undefiled before God even the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

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